

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report  
199301767**

**Hughes Helicopters  
Hughes 500**

**16 June 1993**

Readers are advised that the Australian Transport Safety Bureau investigates for the sole purpose of enhancing transport safety. Consequently, Bureau reports are confined to matters of safety significance and may be misleading if used for any other purposes.

Investigations commenced on or before 30 June 2003, including the publication of reports as a result of those investigations, are authorised by the Executive Director of the Bureau in accordance with Part 2A of the Air Navigation Act 1920.

Investigations commenced after 1 July 2003, including the publication of reports as a result of those investigations, are authorised by the Executive Director of the Bureau in accordance with the Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003 (TSI Act). Reports released under the TSI Act are not admissible as evidence in any civil or criminal proceedings.

**NOTE: All air safety occurrences reported to the ATSB are categorised and recorded. For a detailed explanation on Category definitions please refer to the ATSB website at [www.atsb.gov.au](http://www.atsb.gov.au).**

**Occurrence Number:** 199301767                      **Occurrence Type:** Accident  
**Location:** 70km WNW Townsville  
**State:** QLD    **Inv Category:** 3  
**Date:** Wednesday 16 June 1993  
**Time:** 0925 hours                                      **Time Zone** EST  
**Highest Injury Level:** Fatal  
**Injuries:**

|              | Fatal    | Serious  | Minor    | None     | Total    |
|--------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Crew         | 1        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        |
| Ground       | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        |
| Passenger    | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>1</b> |

**Aircraft Manufacturer:** Hughes Helicopters  
**Aircraft Model:** 369D  
**Aircraft Registration:** VH-XTX                      **Serial Number:** 1290633D  
**Type of Operation:** Charter      Passenger  
**Damage to Aircraft:** Destroyed  
**Departure Point:** Herveys Range Qld  
**Departure Time:** 0905 EST  
**Destination:** Hidden Valley Qld

**Crew Details:**

|                  |                         | <b>Hours on</b> |                    |
|------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| <b>Role</b>      | <b>Class of Licence</b> | <b>Type</b>     | <b>Hours Total</b> |
| Pilot-In-Command | Commercial              | 177.0           | 477                |

**Approved for Release:** Monday, November 21, 1994

The operator briefed the pilot to fly the helicopter along the powerline from one construction camp to the next and pick up passengers for transportation to another location. The operator left the construction camp in a vehicle at about the same time as the helicopter departed, and drove to the camp expecting to see the helicopter on the ground. He became concerned when the helicopter had not arrived at the camp. A short time later, a construction linesman came across the wreckage of the helicopter some 74 m west of the powerline and about 18 km south of its destination.

Examination of the wreckage indicated low power and low rotor RPM at ground impact. The final descent was vertical amongst small trees with the helicopter's attitude 20 - 30 degrees nose high and approximately 40 degrees of left bank.

There had been only minimal damage to the engine and it was later run prior to a specialist strip inspection. Neither the test run nor the inspection revealed any abnormalities that would have affected the operation of the engine. Examination of the remainder of the wreckage did not reveal any faults that may have contributed to the occurrence.

The weather in the range area consisted of low cloud and rain over the ridges. It is possible that the pilot encountered problems with lack of visibility as he proceeded along the ridgeline following the route of the new powerline. However, the dynamics of the crash would indicate that there was no loss of control due to inadvertent flight into cloud or rain. The throttle was found in the closed position and the helicopter had impacted the ground with a high rate of vertical descent with no appreciable forward speed.

The post-mortem examination report indicated that the pilot was suffering a degree of myocardial fibrosis and coronary atherosclerosis. The report concluded that these conditions could have contributed to the accident by way of pilot incapacitation.

The factors contributing to the accident could not be determined.