

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report
199500066**

**Hughes Helicopters
Hughes 300**

13 January 1995

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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.

Occurrence Number: 199500066 **Occurrence Type:** Accident
Location: 5km S Deloraine
State: TAS **Inv Category:** 3
Date: Friday 13 January 1995
Time: 1025 hours **Time Zone** ESuT
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
Total	1	0	0	0	1

Aircraft Manufacturer: Hughes Helicopters
Aircraft Model: 269C
Aircraft Registration: VH-MHM **Serial Number:** 311036
Type of Operation: Commercial Aerial Agriculture/Baiting
Damage to Aircraft: Destroyed
Departure Point: 5 km S Deloraine TAS
Departure Time:
Destination: 5 km S Deloraine TAS

Crew Details:

Role	Class of Licence	Hours on	
		Type	Hours Total
Pilot-In-Command	Commercial	45.0	2340

Approved for Release: Tuesday, December 19, 1995

Factual Information

On the morning of the day of the accident, an employee of the property owner accompanied the pilot of the helicopter on an inspection flight of the crops to be sprayed and of the powerlines considered hazardous to the operation. Three areas were to be treated, ranging in size from 5ha to 40ha.

After treatment of the two larger areas was completed, the pilot began spraying a 5ha potato crop. The helicopter was subsequently seen manoeuvring to the west of the crop. Because it had not been seen manoeuvring in this area before, witnesses believed that the pilot was probably positioning the helicopter for a clean-up run. Shortly after, while proceeding in a southerly direction in a level flight attitude, the landing skids struck a powerline suspended across a gully. The helicopter pitched forward violently, causing the main rotor to sever the tail boom. The aircraft then tumbled to the ground, coming to rest inverted, before a fierce fire broke out.

The pilot was rescued from the burning wreckage and given first aid until medical and rescue personnel arrived. However, he had sustained burns to 90% of his body and died 17 days after the accident.

The powerline was aligned in a north-west/south-east direction. The helicopter had struck a 450m span approximately 16 m above the ground. During the inspection flight, the pilot had reportedly been made aware of the powerline. Soon after his rescue, the pilot indicated that he was unaware of what the aircraft had struck. Visibility at the time of the accident was good. However, the powerline was extremely difficult to see in the bright sunlight because the pilot's perspective was such that the powerline was below the horizon and tended to merge into the background terrain. The length of the wire span and the location of the supporting poles in relation to the treatment area made it unlikely that the pilot would have been alerted to the existence of the powerline.

Because of his injuries, the pilot was unable to provide further information concerning the circumstances of the accident.

Significant Factors

The following factors were considered relevant to the development of the accident:

1. It is most probable that the pilot forgot about the location of the powerline.
2. In the prevailing conditions the powerline would have been extremely difficult to see from the helicopter.