

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report  
198800729**

**Robinson R22-Beta**

**17 August 1988**

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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](http://www.atsb.gov.au).**

This accident was not subject to an on scene investigation.

**Occurrence Number:** 198800729      **Occurrence Type:** Accident  
**Location:** 20 km NE Tipperary Station NT  
**Date:** 17 August 1988      **Time:** 1500  
**Highest Injury Level:** Nil  
**Injuries:**

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None
Crew	0	0	1	1
Ground	0	0	0	-
Passenger	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>

**Aircraft Details:** Robinson R22-Beta  
**Registration:** VH-HFN  
**Serial Number:** 634  
**Operation Type:** Aerial Work (Culling)  
**Damage Level:** Destroyed  
**Departure Point:** Tipperary Station NT  
**Departure Time:** 1440  
**Destination:** Tipperary Station NT

**Approved for Release:** 27 October 1988

#### **Circumstances:**

The culler had just made a kill and the pilot prepared to land so that the beast could be bled. He selected an area of short grass and set the helicopter down with the engine over the barest area. Prior to landing the pilot briefed the culler on the need to deplane quickly to minimise the risk of a ground fire from grass ignited by the hot exhaust. The pilot intended to take-off as soon as possible and return for his passenger when the ground task was finished. Soon after the passenger had deplaned, the pilot was attempting to build up the rotor RPM when he became aware of smoke and flames. He reported that the engine was not responding to throttle input, and when he pulled the collective for liftoff, the engine lost all power and the helicopter settled onto the ground from a few feet. The aircraft was enveloped in flames as the pilot left the cockpit, and it was destroyed by fire. A fenceline cleared of grass existed some 70 metres away, but the pilot was intent of remaining clear of dust areas to prevent wear in the tail rotor assembly. He judged that there was a minimum risk of fire in the area selected for landing, and it was clear of the obstruction posed by the fence. There were no reported aircraft defects or fuel leaks.

#### **Significant Factors:**

It was considered that the following factors were relevant to the development of the accident

1. Error of judgement - the pilot elected to land in grass rather than in a dust area near an obstacle.
2. Known operational hazard of fire from engine exhaust igniting grass.

#### **Recommndations:**

It is recommended that the Civil Aviation Authority re-emphasises to pilots the risk of grass fires from helicopter engine exhausts.