



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Preliminary Report

Location:	Palmer, AK	Accident Number:	WPR21FA143
Date & Time:	March 27, 2021, 18:35 Local	Registration:	N351SH
Aircraft:	Airbus Helicopters AS350-B3	Injuries:	5 Fatal, 1 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 135: Air taxi & commuter - Non-scheduled		

On March 27, 2021, about 1835 Alaska daylight time, an Airbus Helicopters AS350-B3, N351SH, was destroyed when it was involved in an accident near Palmer, Alaska. The pilot and four passengers were fatally injured, and one passenger was seriously injured. The helicopter was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Aviation Regulations* Part 135 on-demand charter flight.

Representatives from the operator reported that the helicopter was contracted by a local lodge to transport passengers from a private residence on Wasilla Lake, Wasilla, Alaska, to the Chugach Mountain Range to conduct heli-ski operations.

Data obtained from a handheld global positioning system (GPS) unit showed that the helicopter departed Wasilla Airport about 1440 and arrived at the Wasilla Lake residence about 10 minutes later. About 53 minutes later, the helicopter departed the residence and flew toward the Chugach Mountains. The helicopter arrived at the intended operating area about 19 minutes later and subsequently flew multiple legs from 1612 and 1807.

The GPS data showed that the helicopter departed again at 1827:05 on a northwest heading and climbed to about 5,900 ft mean sea level (msl).

The data showed that the helicopter's final movements began about 1833 over a ridgeline at 6,266 ft msl (about 14 ft agl), at a groundspeed of 1 kt. The helicopter maintained a low altitude and groundspeed as it maneuvered over the ridgeline for the next few minutes. The data track ceased at 1836:42 near the final resting point of the main wreckage.

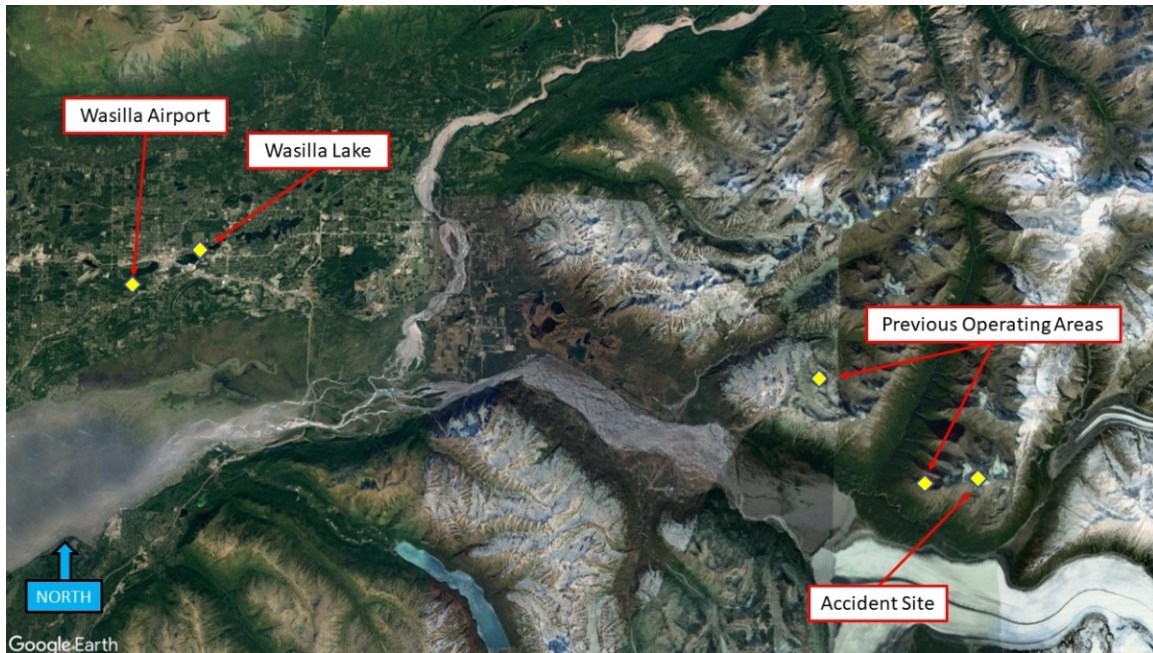


Figure 1: General flight areas from GPS Data

A representative from the operator stated that the helicopter was due to return to its base at 2000. Once it had not returned, they initiated their company procedures for an overdue aircraft. The wreckage was located by helicopter about 2130.

An aerial assessment of the accident site by a National Transportation Safety Board investigator the day after the accident revealed that the helicopter impacted terrain about 15 to 20 ft below the top of a ridge line. The total debris field extended about 900 ft downslope from the top of the ridge line.

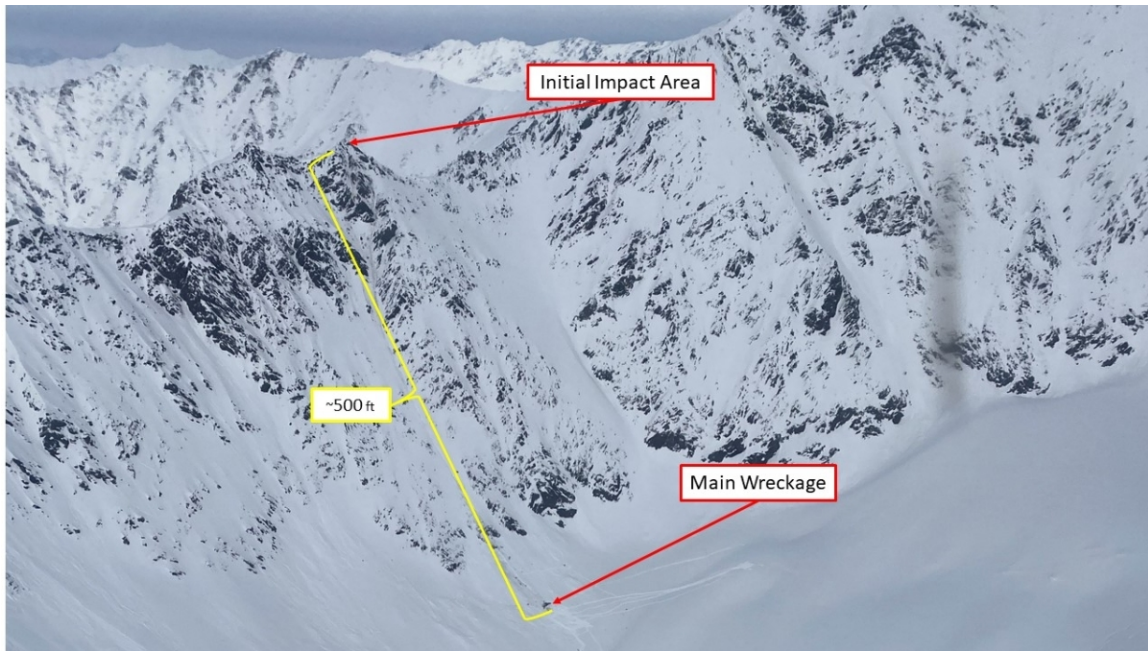


Figure 2: Overview of the accident site.

The wreckage was recovered to a secure location for further examination.

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Airbus Helicopters	Registration:	N351SH
Model/Series:	AS350-B3	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Amateur Built:	No		
Operator:		Operating Certificate(s) Held:	Rotorcraft external load (133), On-demand air taxi (135)

Operator Designator Code:

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	VMC	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	PAAQ, 230 ft msl	Observation Time:	18:53 Local
Distance from Accident Site:	23 Nautical Miles	Temperature/Dew Point:	1°C / -12°C
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	5 knots / , 330°
Lowest Ceiling:		Visibility:	10 miles
Altimeter Setting:	29.89 inches Hg	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	
Departure Point:	Wasilla, AK	Destination:	Palmer, AK

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	4 Fatal, 1 Serious	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:		Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	5 Fatal, 1 Serious	Latitude, Longitude:	61.451718,-148.36552 (est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Cawthra, Joshua
Additional Participating Persons:	Matthew Rigsby; Federal Aviation Administration; Fort Worth, TX Bryan Larimore; Safran Helicopter Engines; Grand Prairie, TX Seth Buttner; Airbus Helicopters USA; Grand Prairie, TX
Note:	