



INTERIM STATEMENT

The information provided herein is of an interim nature. Readers are advised that new information may become available that may alter this interim statement prior to the publication of the final report.

1. The South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) is conducting a safety investigation into a Robinson R22 Beta flight involving ZT-RAS which flew into terrain on 25 February 2017 near Hluleka, Umtata in the Eastern Cape Province.
2. The investigation is being conducted in accordance with the international protocol set out by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). The investigation team includes Investigator In-Charge (IIC) from the South African Civil Aviation Authority.

History of flight

- 2.1 The pilot being the sole occupant on board the helicopter was engaged on a private ferry flight to East London. According to the Greystone Aviation who also own the AMO that maintained the helicopter, they met with the pilot in the morning of the 25 February 2017 at approximately 0330Z. He was coming to ferry the helicopter to East London for relocation to the new owner where it was intended to be used as one of the training aircrafts. The AMO operated the helicopter since June 2016 until October the same year. The helicopter was previously parked in one of their Ballito hangars for a long time. During the period between October 2016 to February 2017 until pick-up date, occasional ground runs or short flight were carried to keep the engine turning and lubrication. The helicopter initially departed BAC Helicopter in Durban at approximately 0500Z for Margate Airport to refuel.
- 2.2 On the day of pick-up after completion of a pre-flight inspection, the pilot called the AMO personnel requesting assistance on the starting-up of the helicopter at approximately 0430Z. They then discovered that the battery had depleted power since it was packed for a period of five months. The AMO was requested to source out an alternative battery pack to assist the starting. The aircraft started whereby the pilot took-off around 0500Z on an uneventful flight of approximately an hour to Margate Airport (FAMG) to refuel. Upon refuelling the pilot carried on-board a 20 litres jerry can filled with fuel which he planned to refuel the helicopter along his route in one of the available aerodromes (Port St Johns, Mazeppa Bay, Wavecrest or Morgan Bay) should it be necessary. The pilot however did not stop in any of the available airstrips between Margate and the accident site.
- 2.3 Upon reaching the area where the accident occurred, the helicopter was noticed by the residents due to its approaching noise. It was seen approaching from a northern direction

moving in a manner of an object straggling against the strong wind conditions which prevailed in the area at the time.

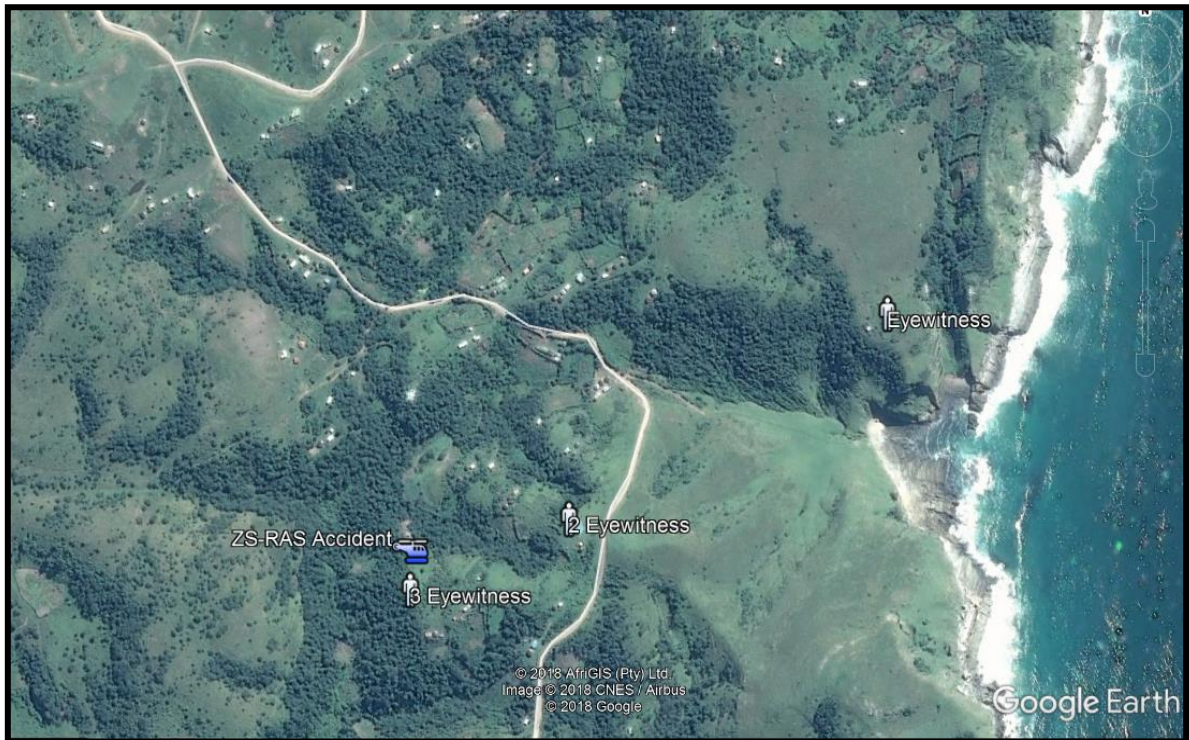


Figure 1: Shows the google of accident site

Suddenly the helicopter engine noise stopped and it was then observed flying in circle until it disappeared onto the ground in a busy terrain as it appeared for the eyewitness in reference to his point of observation position.



Figure 2: Helicopter as it was found

According to the eyewitnesses, strong coastally wind prevailed in the area of the accident site. The helicopter was found lying on its belly with its right hand side against the tree and both skid gears spread sideways. The helicopter sustained substantial damages during the accident sequence. According to the residents who helped to remove the pilot from the helicopter wreckage, the pilot stated that he switched off the engine ignition switch prior to impact during a forced landing. The pilot however passed on as they carried him up the hill away from the wreckage.

2.5 The pilot held a valid commercial licence with a type endorsement and was issued on 27 June 2016 with an expiry date of 25 June 2023. His medical was issued on 24 May 2016 with an expiry date of 31 May 2017.

2.6 The aircraft had its last MPI carried out and signed off on 18 April 2016.

2.7 The post-mortem results concluded that the cause of death was, "multiple blunt trauma due to aviation accident". The toxicology report was not available at the time of this preliminary report.

2.8 The helicopter accident occurred during day light meteorological conditions in a remote residential area with GPS coordinates: S 31°47'4.79", E 029°20'49.60" and a field elevation of 150ft.

3. Although the investigation is ongoing, the following findings have been made:

3.1 The pilot was a commercial pilot license holder and had the helicopter type endorsed on his license. His medical certificate was valid.

3.2 The helicopter had a valid certificate of airworthiness at the time of the accident. According to the maintenance records, the helicopter was maintained by a regulator approved AMO which held a valid certificate as obtained in accordance with regulatory procedures.

3.3 The aircraft had its last MPI carried out and signed off on 18 April 2016.

3.4 The damages on the helicopter wreckage are consistence with hard impact during contact with the ground.

3.8 The post-mortem results concluded that the cause of death was, "multiple blunt trauma due to aviation accident". The toxicology report was not available at the time of this preliminary report.

4. The following safety recommendation has been issued by the SACAA.

4.1 None at this stage of the investigation.

5. The SACAA investigation is on-going and we will be looking into other aspects of this accident which may have safety implications.

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