LIMITED OCCURRENCE INVESTIGATION REPORT – FINAL

Reference Number	CA18/3/2/1527						
Classification	Serious Incident	**Date**	2 February 2026		**Time**	0650Z	
Type of Operation	Training (Part 141)						
Location							
Place of Departure	Ultimate Heliport, Midrand, Gauteng Province	Place of Intended Landing	Ultimate Heliport, Midrand, Gauteng Province				
Place of Occurrence	Main taxiway at Grand Central Aerodrome (FAGC), Midrand, Gauteng Province						
GPS Co-ordinates	Latitude	28° 59' 21.86" S	Longitude	28° 08' 22.55" E	Elevation	5335 ft	
Aircraft Information							
Registration	ZS-RBL						
Make; Model; S/N	Bell; B407 (Serial Number: 53548)						
Damage to Aircraft	Minor		Total Aircraft Hours	3 133.7			
Pilot-in-command							
Licence Type	Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL)		Gender	Male	Age	57	
Licence Valid	Yes	Total Hours	6 210	Total Hours on Type	1 400		
Total Hours 30 Days	27.9		Total Flying on Type Past 90 Days	270			
People On-board	2 + 0	**Injuries**	0	**Fatalities**	0	**Other (on ground)**	0

What Happened

On Monday morning, 2 February 2026, a chief flight instructor (CFI) and a pilot on-board a Bell 407 helicopter registered ZS-RBL were conducting a proficiency training flight from Ultimate Heliport in Midrand, Gauteng province, with the intention to return to the same heliport. Visual meteorological conditions (VMC) prevailed at the time of the flight which was conducted under the provisions of Part 141 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011, as amended.

The CFI stated that they conducted a pre-flight inspection of the helicopter and no anomalies were noted. The helicopter had a total of 332.9 litres (L) of Jet A1 fuel in the tanks. The CFI was the pilot monitoring (PM) and the pilot on proficiency training was the pilot flying (PF). After departure from Ultimate Heliport, the aircraft routed to Grand Central Airport (FAGC) in Gauteng province to conduct proficiency check flight exercises. Upon arrival at FAGC, the CFI made a request to the air traffic control officer (ATCO) to conduct autorotation exercises overhead the main taxiway. After permission was granted, the pair completed two uneventful autorotation exercises with the helicopter facing a northerly direction. Whilst on approach to complete the third autorotation, the PF flared the helicopter and the CFI noted that the engine was not spooling up in time to recover from autorotation. The rotor revolutions per minute (rpm) at the time were low. Therefore, the CFI took control, and during landing, the helicopter's skid landing gear impacted the surface of the main taxiway hard. After landing, the

CFI opened the throttle to maximum power and took off to Ultimate Heliport. The engine and rotor rpm read normal after take-off; there was no indication of vibration or defect after take-off and during the flight.

The helicopter landed safely at Ultimate Heliport apron. During the post-flight inspection, the pair observed that the top part of the two vertical stabilisers and one main rotor blade were damaged. Evidence indicated that one of the main rotor blades might have struck the top part of the vertical stabilisers during the hard landing at FAGC's main taxiway area.

Figures 1 and 2: Damage to the top section of the two vertical stabilisers. (Source: Operator)

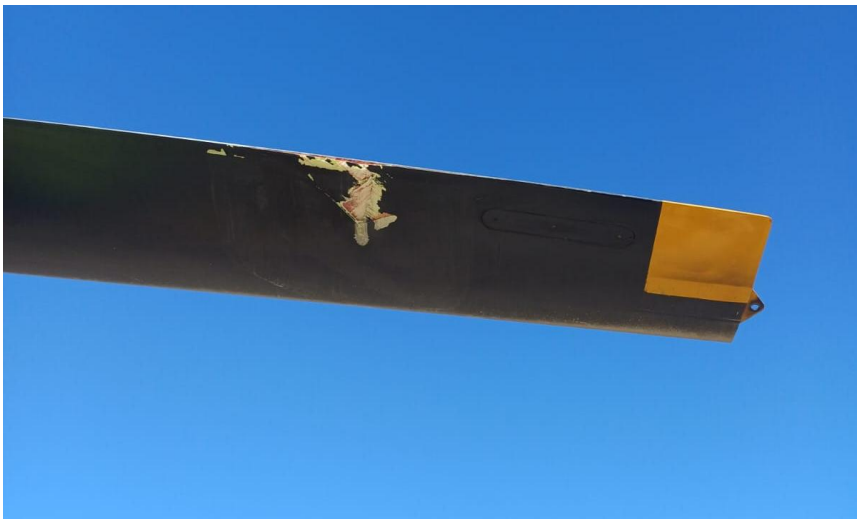

Figure 3: The main rotor blade that struck the top part of the vertical stabiliser. (Source: Operator)

Findings

Chief Flight Instructor (CFI)

1. The CFI had a Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) that was initially issued by the Regulator (SACAA) on 11 March 2011. The CPL was renewed on 26 July 2025 with an expiry date of 31 August 2026. The CFI's licence was valid at the time of the flight.

2. The CFI had a Class 1 aviation medical certificate that was issued on 9 June 2025 with an expiry date of 30 June 2026. The CFI had a restriction to wear suitable corrective lenses for his vision.

3. The CFI had a total of 6 210.0 flying hours of which 1 400 were accumulated on the helicopter type. The helicopter type was endorsed in his pilot (CFI) licence.

Pilot in Training

4. The pilot had an Airline Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL) that was initially issued by the Regulator on 12 August 2016. The ATPL was renewed on 23 April 2025 with an expiry date of 30 April 2026. The pilot's licence was valid at the time of the flight.

5. The pilot had a Class 1 aviation medical certificate that was issued on 12 December 2025 with an expiry date of 28 February 2026. The pilot had a restriction to wear suitable corrective lenses for his vision.

6. The pilot had a total of 3 581.9 flying hours of which 1 143.5 were accumulated on the helicopter type. The helicopter type was endorsed in his pilot licence.

Helicopter

7. The last mandatory periodic inspection (MPI) of the helicopter was conducted and certified on 29 July 2025 at 3 083.3 total airframe hours after which a Certificate of Release to Service (CRS) was issued with an expiry date of 29 July 2026 or at 3 383.3 hours, whichever comes first. The helicopter had accrued 50.4 hours since the last MPI.

8. The aircraft maintenance organisation (AMO) which conducted the MPI of the helicopter had an AMO Certificate that was issued by the Regulator on 1 October 2025 with an expiry date of 30 September 2026.

9. The helicopter Certificate of Airworthiness (C of A) was initially issued by the Regulator on 27 February 2003. The latest C of A had an expiry date of 28 February 2027.

10. The helicopter Certificate of Registration (C of R) was issued to the current owner on 28 October 2018.

Probable Cause(s)

The engine spooled up slowly during recovery after an autorotation exercise which resulted in a hard landing during which the main rotor blade struck and damaged the top part of the two vertical stabilisers.

Contributing Factor(s)

None.

Safety Action(s)

None.

Safety Message and/or Safety Recommendation/s

None.

About this Report

The decision to conduct a limited investigation is based on factors including whether the cause is known and the evidence supporting the cause is clear, the level of safety benefit likely to be obtained from an investigation and that will determine the scope of an investigation. For this occurrence, a limited investigation has been conducted, and the Accident and Incident Investigations Division (AIID) has relied on the information submitted by the affected person/s and organisation/s to compile this limited report. The report has been compiled using information supplied in the initial notification, as well as from follow-up desk top enquiries to bring awareness of potential safety issues to the industry in respect of this occurrence, as well as possible safety action/s that the industry might want to consider in preventing a recurrence of a similar occurrence.

All times given in this report are Co-ordinated Universal Time (UTC) and will be denoted by (Z). South African Standard Time is UTC plus 2 hours.

Purpose

In terms of Regulation 12.03.1 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011 and ICAO Annex 13, this report was compiled in the interest of the promotion of aviation safety and the reduction of the risk of aviation accidents or incidents and not to apportion blame or liability.

Disclaimer

This report is issued by:

Accident and Incident Investigations Division
South African Civil Aviation Authority
Republic of South Africa