



AVIATION



HIGHWAY



MARINE



RAILROAD



PIPELINE

## Aviation Investigation Preliminary Report

|                                |                                                                                 |                         |            |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| <b>Location:</b>               | Canton, MS                                                                      | <b>Accident Number:</b> | CEN25MA115 |
| <b>Date &amp; Time:</b>        | March 10, 2025, 12:37 Local                                                     | <b>Registration:</b>    | N835CS     |
| <b>Aircraft:</b>               | EUROCOPTER DEUTSCHLAND<br>GMBH EC 135 P2+                                       | <b>Injuries:</b>        | 3 Fatal    |
| <b>Flight Conducted Under:</b> | Part 135: Air taxi & commuter - Non-scheduled - Air Medical (Medical emergency) |                         |            |

On March 10, 2025, about 1237 central daylight time, an Airbus Helicopters (formerly Eurocopter Deutschland) EC135 P2+ helicopter, N835CS, operated as AirCare 3, was destroyed when it was involved in an accident near Canton, Mississippi. The commercial pilot, the flight paramedic, and the flight nurse sustained fatal injuries. The helicopter was operated by Med-Trans Corporation as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 135 air medical flight.

According to the operator, the purpose of the flight was to reposition the helicopter back to the home base at Golden Triangle Regional Airport (GTR), Columbus, Mississippi, after the crew transported a patient to the St. Dominic-Jackson Memorial Hospital Heliport (MS46), Jackson, Mississippi. The helicopter operated on a company visual flight rules flight plan. A flight risk assessment tool was completed, and the flight was classified as low risk, per the operator's safety management system. The pilot was in the front right seat, the flight paramedic was in the front left seat, and the flight nurse was in the rear right seat (both rear seats were rear facing and the cockpit and cabin were separated by a curtain).

According to the operator, the helicopter departed from MS46 and flew about 0.25 miles to the south, to the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) MED-COM heliport and where the helicopter was topped off with Jet A fuel. The helicopter then departed from the UMMC MED-COM heliport and began the flight to GTR.

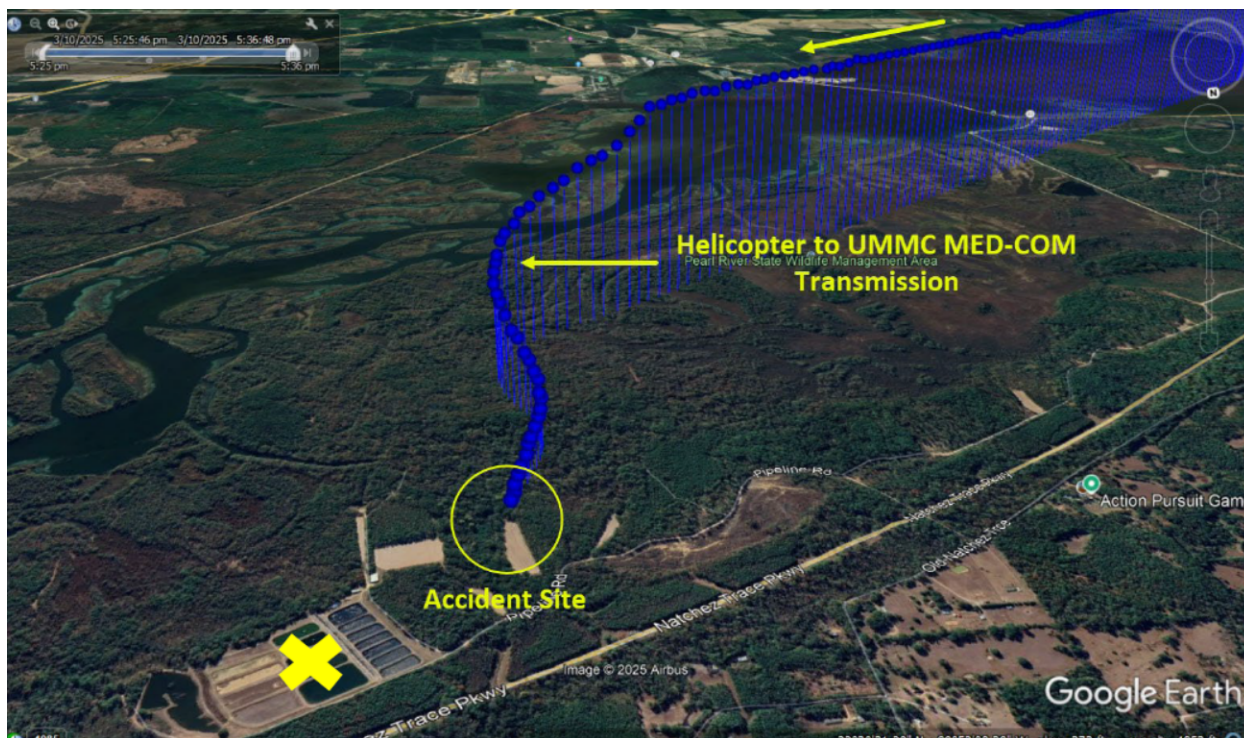
According to preliminary information from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) the helicopter initially communicated with air traffic control (ATC) at Jackson-Medgar Wiley Evers International Airport (JAN), Jackson, Mississippi. About 5 minutes before the accident, the pilot reported "clear to the north" and terminated communication with JAN ATC.



**Figure 1.** The accident flightpath, shown in red, overlaid on a visual flight rules sectional chart.

A preliminary review of automatic dependent surveillance-broadcast (ADS-B) data showed the helicopter departed from MS46 and began to climb to the northeast. The helicopter flew over the Ross R. Barnett Reservoir, and the flightpath remained south of the Natchez Trace Parkway, as shown in figure 1. The helicopter eventually reached an altitude of about 2,500 ft above mean sea level (msl).

Shortly after the helicopter flew over the Pearl River State Wildlife Management Area, it began to descend. About halfway through the descent, the flight nurse transmitted over the radio to the UMMC MED-COM, "we've got a major problem, we are having an emergency landing in a field right now, ops are not good, controls are giving us a lot of trouble, coming in fast." No further radio transmissions were recorded from the helicopter from either the UMMC MED-COM or ATC.



**Figure 2.** Accident flightpath, shown in blue, terminating at the Pearl River State Wildlife Management Area, according to ADS-B data (Sources: FAA and Google Earth). The Turcotte Fish Hatchery is shown by the yellow X.

ADS-B data indicate that, during the descent, the helicopter turned to the north. It impacted multiple trees just to the south of a flat grass field on the Pearl River State Wildlife Management Area, as shown in figure 2. The helicopter came to rest on the southern end of the grass field, at the tree line, at an elevation of about 320 ft msl. The accident site was located about 1/4 mile southwest of the Turcotte Fish Hatchery. The wreckage was destroyed by a postimpact fire that burned for about 3 hours. Due to the remote location of the accident site, fire department units had to deploy 1,300 ft of hose after the initial fire suppression, which was carried out using tank water. Water was then shuttled for the remainder of the firefighting operation.

A witness employed as a Turcotte Fish Hatchery manager stated in a postaccident interview that he was working at the hatchery at the time of the accident. He said he was in his truck near the hatchery ponds, which allowed him to be at a higher elevation because the hatchery ponds are raised in elevation. He was about 700 yards from the eventual accident site and likely further when he first saw the helicopter. He heard a “boom” or an “explosion,” which is what first drew his attention to the helicopter. He looked toward the hatchery and saw the helicopter while it was airborne. He said he heard the “boom” with the truck windows closed, and the boom was loud. He said that he could not recall hearing any engine sound after the “boom,” and the helicopter sound was not noticeable to him.

According to the witness, when he first saw the helicopter, it did not change course and was pointed straight at him before it turned north and descended “at a pretty good rate.” It appeared to him that the pilot was “having trouble controlling” the helicopter. The witness reported that he did not see any smoke or fire from the helicopter. He estimated the tail was pitching up and down an estimated 45° at the most. The witness further observed that the helicopter was not descending straight down but was “coasting” and descending at a pretty good rate, which he estimated as a 40° to 45° descent angle. He said the helicopter’s estimated nose down attitude was about 30°. He said he could not tell if the tail was moving sideways because he was looking at the side of the helicopter. He said there was “a little wobble” of the nose from left to right. The helicopter was rolling “just a little bit.” He said the time from the “boom” to helicopter’s impact with the ground spanned no more than about 15 seconds.



**Figure 3.** The destroyed helicopter at the accident site.

The National Transportation Safety Board, the FAA, Airbus Helicopters, Med-Trans Corporation, and Global Medical Response traveled to the accident site. Due to postcrash fire damage as shown in figure 3, none of the helicopter systems could be functionally tested.

The wreckage was recovered from the accident site and transported to a secure location.

The helicopter was manufactured in 2012 (figure 4 is a pre-accident photograph of the helicopter). It was equipped with two Pratt & Whitney Canada PW206B2 turboshaft engines, an autopilot system, and a crash-resistant fuel system. The helicopter was transferred to the Med-Trans operating certificate in 2020. The helicopter underwent its most recent inspection during an approved aircraft inspection program, which was about 2.7 hours before the accident.



**Figure 4.** The helicopter before the day of the accident (Source: Med-Trans Corporation).

The helicopter was part of the UMMC critical care transport program, which began in 1996. The program utilizes both ground and air assets. At the time of the accident, UMMC had four air medical helicopters supporting their critical care transport program across Mississippi. Med-Trans Corporation (with Global Medical Response as the parent company), based in Denton, Texas, provided the helicopter and the pilots to support the program. The Med-Trans Corporation Operations Control Center (commonly known as the OCC) is located in Lewisville, Texas.

The pilot was hired by Med-Trans in September 2024 and passed the Part 135 pilot-in-command checkride in October 2024. He held a commercial pilot certificate with airplane single-engine land, multiengine land, rotorcraft-helicopter, instrument airplane, and instrument rotorcraft ratings. The pilot accumulated about 10,644 hours as a helicopter pilot. FAA records showed the pilot reported a total airplane flight time of 132 hours in 2007.

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

|                                  |                                |                                       |                          |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Aircraft Make:</b>            | EUROCOPTER<br>DEUTSCHLAND GMBH | <b>Registration:</b>                  | N835CS                   |
| <b>Model/Series:</b>             | EC 135 P2+                     | <b>Aircraft Category:</b>             | Helicopter               |
| <b>Amateur Built:</b>            |                                |                                       |                          |
| <b>Operator:</b>                 | MED-TRANS CORP                 | <b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b> | On-demand air taxi (135) |
| <b>Operator Designator Code:</b> | M3XA                           |                                       |                          |

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

|                                         |                    |                                     |                      |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>     | VMC                | <b>Condition of Light:</b>          | Day                  |
| <b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b> | KJAN, 296 ft msl   | <b>Observation Time:</b>            | 11:54 Local          |
| <b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>     | 17 Nautical Miles  | <b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>       | 17°C / 5°C           |
| <b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>          | Clear              | <b>Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:</b> | 7 knots / None, 350° |
| <b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>                  | None               | <b>Visibility:</b>                  | 10 miles             |
| <b>Altimeter Setting:</b>               | 30.04 inches Hg    | <b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>   | CVFR                 |
| <b>Departure Point:</b>                 | Jackson, MS (MS46) | <b>Destination:</b>                 | Columbus, MS (GTR)   |

## Wreckage and Impact Information

|                            |         |                             |                            |
|----------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Crew Injuries:</b>      | 3 Fatal | <b>Aircraft Damage:</b>     | Destroyed                  |
| <b>Passenger Injuries:</b> | N/A     | <b>Aircraft Fire:</b>       | On-ground                  |
| <b>Ground Injuries:</b>    | N/A     | <b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>  | Unknown                    |
| <b>Total Injuries:</b>     | 3 Fatal | <b>Latitude, Longitude:</b> | 32.559192,-89.907614 (est) |

## Administrative Information

|                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>     | Gallo, Mitchell                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Additional Participating Persons:</b> | Andy Olvis; FAA AVP-100; Washington, DC<br>Josh Brannon; Global Medical Response; Lewisville, TX<br>Axel Rokohl; German Federal Bureau of Aircraft Accident Investigation; Braunschweig, OF<br>Seth Buttner; Airbus Helicopters; Grand Prairie, TX<br>Beverley Harvey; Transportation Safety Board of Canada; Gatineau, OF<br>Merryn Speilman; Pratt & Whitney Canada; Longueuil, OF |
| <b>Investigation Class:</b>              | <a href="#">Class 2</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Note:</b>                             | The NTSB traveled to the scene of this accident.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |