



AVIATION



HIGHWAY



MARINE



RAILROAD



PIPELINE

Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Cedar City, Utah	Accident Number:	WPR26LA199
Date & Time:	May 23, 2026, 07:21 Local	Registration:	N917SU
Aircraft:	Bell 206-L4	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Loss of control in flight	Injuries:	2 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Instructional		

Analysis

The flight instructor, who was flying from the left seat, reported that during the initial hover, the helicopter's engine governor reference rpm indicated about 104%. To adjust the governor reference rpm, the instructor reached across to the right-seat collective-mounted governor INCR/DECR switch. As he contacted the switch, the instructor failed to maintain helicopter control, and the helicopter pitched nose up, moved aft, and descended.

The flight crew reported that the helicopter contacted the ground, bounced, and began to spin out of control. Airport surveillance video showed the helicopter moving aft while descending before contacting the taxiway. The helicopter subsequently became airborne, rotated to the right, and impacted the ground. During the impact sequence, the tailboom and main rotor system separated from the helicopter.

The pilot reported that there were no preaccident mechanical malfunctions or failures with the helicopter that would have precluded normal operation.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:

The flight instructor's failure to maintain helicopter control while manipulating the engine governor reference rpm adjustment during hover operations, which resulted in a loss of control and impact with the ground.

Findings

Personnel issues	Aircraft control - Pilot
Aircraft	Pitch control - Not attained/maintained

Factual Information

History of Flight

Takeoff	Loss of control in flight (Defining event)
Takeoff	Abnormal runway contact
Takeoff	Tailstrike

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Flight instructor	Age:	32,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	4-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Helicopter	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	Helicopter; Instrument helicopter	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 1 Without waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	February 10, 2026
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	February 25, 2026
Flight Time:	1424 hours (Total, all aircraft), 219 hours (Total, this make and model), 1347 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 196 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 61 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 4 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Student pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	25,Male
Airplane Rating(s):		Seat Occupied:	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	4-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Helicopter	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 1 Without waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	September 16, 2025
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	June 17, 2025
Flight Time:	222 hours (Total, all aircraft), 12 hours (Total, this make and model), 156 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 28 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 15 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 2 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Bell	Registration:	N917SU
Model/Series:	206-L4	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:	1994	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	52527
Landing Gear Type:	High skid	Seats:	7
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	May 12, 2026 Continuous airworthiness	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	4450 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	47 Hrs	Engines:	1 Turbo shaft
Airframe Total Time:	15484.9 Hrs as of last inspection	Engine Manufacturer:	Rolls-Royce
ELT:	C126 installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	250-C30P
Registered Owner:	Southern Utah University	Rated Power:	420 Horsepower
Operator:	Southern Utah University	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	Rotorcraft external load (133)

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	CDC, 5590 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	0 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	06:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	14°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	4 knots / None	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	None / None
Wind Direction:	50°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	N/A / N/A
Altimeter Setting:	30.05 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	10°C / 1°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Cedar City, UT	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	Company VFR
Destination:	Cedar City, UT	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:		Type of Airspace:	Class E

Airport Information

Airport:	Cedar City Regional CDC	Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:	5622 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:		IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	None

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	2 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:		Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 Minor	Latitude, Longitude:	37.70097,-113.09885

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Slinker, Stanley

Additional Participating Persons: Kelly Allred; FAA; SLC, UT

Original Publish Date: September 3, 2026

Last Revision Date:

Investigation Class: [Class 4](#)

Note: The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.

Investigation Docket: <https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=203051>

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