

# Aircraft Accident Witness Statement

Holly Akenson

3/8/99

Sent to Janet Pope w/ Jims to Forward

- I was walking to the landing site with Janet Pope and was 40 yards from the helicopter when this accident occurred.
- The helicopter made a normal looking approach, heading west toward the landing site.
- I did not realize there was a problem until I saw the helicopter "landing" in the stream.
- As the helicopter approached the landing site it dropped steeply to the stream.
- The front of the skids were in the snow at the edge of the west stream bank.
- It momentarily looked like the people & helicopter would be fine.
- But, after the helicopter made contact with the ground the mast assembly and blades smashed into the top right

Holly Akenson  
Taylor Ranch Wilderness Field Station  
HC 83  
Cascade, ID 83611  
March 3, 1999

Richard Bottger  
Director, Administrative Services  
College of FWR  
University of Idaho  
Moscow, ID 83844-1131

Dear Dick:

This is a summary of the helicopter accident that occurred at Taylor Ranch Field Station on February 28, 1999.

#### **Background Information**

- Idaho Department of Fish and Game was flying helicopter elk sightability surveys in Unit 26 (Big Creek) and 20A. Jeff Rohlman, Regional Wildlife Manager coordinated the surveys on site
- Valley Helicopter Services was contracted through the Office of Aircraft Services to fly these elk surveys. Jim Pope was the pilot of the Hiller 12E Soloy helicopter (N2239).
- The helicopter crew was based out of Taylor Ranch Field Station during the Unit 26 flights.
- Jim Akenson, Taylor Ranch Co-Manager was a volunteer survey observer on the helicopter during the accident. Pilot Jim Pope and IDF&G biologist Jeff Rohlman were the other 2 occupants. Holly Akenson, Taylor Ranch Co-Manager and Janet Pope of Valley Helicopter observed the accident from a distance of 40 yards.

#### **Accident Description**

- The helicopter approached from the east to land at the head (east end) of the Taylor Ranch airstrip.
- As the helicopter descended, the pilot could not get any lift from the pitch adjustment for the landing.
- The helicopter made a hard landing in (straddled over) Pioneer Creek, 10 yards short of the landing site.

- The helicopter blades cut off the tail, and the mast assembly smashed into the top of the helicopter cabin.
- All 3 passengers got out of the helicopter on their own. No one had major injuries.

### **Post Accident Activities**

- Both saddle fuel tanks were leaking Jet A (diesel). We contained the leaking fuel and pumped the remaining fuel from these tanks. We estimated we lost 1 gallon of fuel in Pioneer Creek.
- Valley Helicopter reported the accident to the Office of Aircraft Services who reported it to the National Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Aviation Administration.
- Holly Akenson reported the accident by phone on March 1 to Richard Bottger, University of Idaho.
- Office of Aircraft Services air safety inspector Larry Brosnan flew in on March 2 to investigate the incident and file a report for OAS, NTSB, and FAA. He interviewed Jim and Holly Akenson and will send 2 copies of the report to the University of Idaho, 1 to Taylor Ranch and 1 to Richard Bottger.
- Valley Helicopter winched the helicopter out of Pioneer Creek and prepared it for slinging out by heavy lift helicopter.
- Other debris was boxed up and is to be flown out by airplane.

### **Contact People**

Jeff Rolhman  
Regional Wildlife Manager  
Idaho Dept. Fish and Game  
P.O. Box 905  
McCall, ID 83638

Jim and Janet Pope  
Owners  
Valley Helicopter  
P.O. Box 54  
Clarkston, WA 99403

Larry Brosnan  
Department of Interior  
Office of Aircraft Services  
P. O. Box 15428  
Boise, ID 83715

Sincerely,

Holly Akenson  
Taylor Ranch Manager