



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Washington  
Office

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File Code: 6730

Date: September 1, 2002

Route To:

Subject: Expanded (72-Hour) Briefing  
Lytle Fire, San Bernardino National Forest, USDA Forest Service, Pacific  
Southwest Region, August 30, 2002

To: Regional Forester, R5

**THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

Name of injured: None.

Preliminary factual findings:

- Helicopter was returning to helibase to refuel when it experienced a loss of hydraulic flight control pressure.
- The pilot lost control of the helicopter while attempting to land.
- Pilot related that helicopter was approximately 10 feet above the intended landing zone with slow forward movement when the cyclic flight control went “hard-over” to the right rear and he was unable to regain control prior to the helicopter impacting the ground on its right side.
- The helicopter sustained substantial damage.

Narrative:

Helicopter N747A, an S-55T, owned by Central Sierra Helicopters and operated by the USDA Forest Service, was dispatched to provide water bucket support on the Lytle Fire on August 30, 2002 at about 0820 hours. The only occupant was Pilot Brett Hendriks (right pilot seat).

The helicopter performed water bucket support on the fire for approximately 1.9 hours. During it's last water drop the bucket failed to release the water. After a couple of attempts to get it to release, the pilot, being also near the end of his fuel cycle, decided to return to the helibase to refuel and repair the water bucket. Soon after announcing he was enroute to the helibase, the hydraulic pressure caution light illuminated and the flight controls became stiff with aerodynamic feed-back forces felt in the flight controls. He observed an open area in the Lytle Creek drainage to the right of his flight path. He began an approach to the intended landing area and was about 10 feet above the rocky creek bed with some forward movement when the cyclic flight control moved “hard-over” to the right rear. He attempted with both hands to regain control of the cyclic but was unable to move it. The helicopter pitched over on it's right side, the rotor blades contacted a rocky shelf and the helicopter impacted on its right side. The pilot secured the engine and exited unassisted. Medical examination has not revealed any injuries.



A Forest Service investigation team is on site and an investigation is in progress.

*/s/ Glenn Gottschall*

Glenn Gottschall, Team Leader

cc:

National Aviation Safety Manager

Official case file