

GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE

PRELIMINARY REPORT:

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVOLVING A BELL 430 HELICOPTER, REGISTRATION Z-PED, AT KUDENGA FARM, MASHONALAND EAST PROVINCE, ZIMBABWE ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

Purpose of the Investigation: Consistent with the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention)-Article 26, Annex 13 to the Chicago Convention, the related protocols and circulars as domesticated in the Civil Aviation Act [Chapter 13:16] as amended, and Civil Aviation (Accident and Incident Investigation) Regulations, 2018, Section 4 published in S.I. 78 of 2018, regarding objective of aircraft occurrences investigations, this report was developed in the interest of the prevention of future accidents and incidents from similar cause(s). Subject to the exceptions which may be in terms of the law, the purpose of the investigation is not for apportioning blame or liability, and this report is not admissible in a court of law and shall not be used for litigation purposes.

***Note**: The preliminary report provides an initial, factual overview of the accident, and further analysis and investigation are necessary to determine the probable cause(s) and contributing factors. A final report will be issued once the investigation is complete, providing a comprehensive analysis of the accident and recommendations for safety improvements. Safety recommendations may however be issued at any stage of the investigation.*

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Administrative Information

Description	Comment
Reference/State File Number:	ZIM/MOTID-AIG ACCID 005/2026
Aircraft Type	Bell 430
Aircraft Nationality	Zimbabwean
Aircraft Registration	Z-PED
Aircraft Operator	Sky Helicopters Company (Pvt) Ltd
Operating Category	Private Operation
Phase of Operation	Cruise
Injury Level	Fatal
Damage Level	Destroyed
Scope of Investigation:	Full Annex 13 Investigation
Delegated To (if applicable):	N/A
Organization Conducting Investigation:	Ministry of Transport and Infrastructural Development - Air Accidents and Incidents Investigation Department
Investigator Email:	airaccidents@motid.gov.zw

1.2 Event Narrative

On 30 September 2026 at 1420z, a Bell 407 helicopter, registration Z-OSM, and a Bell 430 helicopter, registration Z-PED, departed Gandami Village, Mashonaland East Province, on a private flight to Marondera. The two helicopters were flying in formation under visual flight rules.

The aircraft tracked north-east, with Z-OSM flying to the left of track and Z-PED to the right of track. The flight was uneventful until approximately ten minutes after departure, when a low-level cloud layer was reported approaching from the east. Z-OSM turned west to avoid the clouds with Z-PED proceeding north-east and reporting that its route in that direction was clear. Z-OSM continued to the destination as planned. The last radio transmission from Z-PED indicated that the aircraft had entered a further layer of cloud and had not yet emerged from it.

At approximately 1450z, witnesses at Kudenga Farm reported hearing a helicopter overhead but were unable make visual contact with it owing to drizzle and dense fog.

The sound continued overhead for approximately ten minutes, after which witnesses at several locations across the farm reported hearing a loud impact, followed by silence.

At 1500z, Marondera Central Police Station of the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) was notified of an aircraft accident at Kudenga Farm, approximately 22 km south-west of Marondera. Police arrived at the site at 1515z and confirmed that the aircraft had crashed in a field on the farm and that there were no survivors. Part of the wreckage was still burning, but the drizzle confined the fire to the immediate area of the wreckage.

1.3 Classification

Accident	Serious Incident	Incident
X		

1.4 Category

UIMC: Unintended flight in IMC
CFIT: Controlled flight into or toward terrain

1.5 Dangerous Goods on Flight?

Yes	No	Unknown	If Yes, UN Number:
	X		

2 FACTUAL INFORMATION

2.1 History of the flight

Occurrence Details:

Description	**Comment**
Local Date	30 September 2026
Local Time	17:00
UTC Date:	30 September 2026
UTC Time:	15:00
Elevation:	1 547m
State/Area of Occurrence:	Kudenga Farm, Mashonaland Province, Zimbabwe

Location of Occurrence:	22 km SW of Marondera Town, Zimbabwe -18.299528, 31.375105
Last Point of Departure	Gandami Village, Chikomba District, Mashonaland East Province
Intended Point of Landing	Marondera, Mashonaland East Province

2.2 Injuries to Persons

Injuries	**Crew**	**Passengers**	**Total in the aircraft**	**Others**
Fatal	1	4	5	N/A
Serious	0	0	0	N/A
Minor	0	0	0	N/A
None	0	0	0	N/A
TOTAL	1	4	5	

2.3 Damage to Aircraft

The aircraft was destroyed by impact forces and a post-impact fire. It was demolished or consumed by fire to such an extent that the make and model was not readily distinguishable without viewing its written documents, data plate or insignia.

The airframe disintegrated into numerous fragments with the single largest pieces being the upper fuselage with engines attached and the main rotor assembly with the main rotor blades attached.



Figure 2.1: Airframe and Engine Damage

2.4 Other Damage

There were no buildings, vehicles, navigation facilities, structures or installations in the vicinity of the accident site. The grass and earth along the wreckage trail was burnt by an ensuing post-crash fire.



Figure 2.2: Accident site showing burn trail.

2.5 Personnel Information

	Pilot in Command	**Co-Pilot**
Nationality	Zimbabwean	N/A
Qualifications	CPL (H)	N/A
Age	44	N/A
Total Hours	2756	N/A
Total Past 24 Hours	1.7	N/A
Total Past 90 Days	135	N/A
Total on Type	614	N/A
Previous Occurrences w.r.t. crew	Nil	N/A
Medical Certificate	Valid	N/A

2.6 Aircraft Information

2.6.1 Airframe:

Description	**Comment**
Aircraft Type:	Rotary wing
Registration:	Z-PED
State of Registry:	Zimbabwe
Aircraft Manufacturer:	Bell
Aircraft Model:	430
Serial Number:	49103
Year of Build:	2004
Total Airframe Hours	1831.2
Last Inspection (Date & Hours)	25 August 2026 / 1 785.2 hrs
Hours since Last MPI	46
C of A (Issue Date & Expiry Date)	21/08/2026, Expiry 08/05/2027
C of R (Issue Date) (Present Owner)	Issued 29 May 2026 - Sky Helicopters Company (Pvt) Ltd
Mass Group:	>3175 kg
Previous Occurrences w.r.t. Aircraft	Nil

2.6.2 Engine:

Description	**Engine # 1**	**Engine # 2**
Manufacturer/Model	Rolls Royce 250-C40B	Rolls Royce 250-C40B
Serial Number	CAE-844224	CAE-844225
Part Number	250-C40B	250-C40B
Fuel	Jet -A1	Jet -A1
Hours since New	2798	2798
Hours since Overhaul	N/A	N/A

2.6.3 Main Rotor:

Description	**Main Rotor Blade # 1**	**Main Rotor Blade # 2**	**Main Rotor Blade # 3**	**Main Rotor Blade # 4**
Manufacturer	Bell Helicopter Textron	Bell Helicopter Textron	Bell Helicopter Textron	Bell Helicopter Textron
Serial Number	A-1790	A-1811	A-1791	A-1789
Part Number	430-015-001-123	430-015-001-123	430-015-001-123	430-015-001-123

2.6.4 Tail Rotor

Description	Tail Rotor Blade # 1	Tail Rotor Blade # 2
Manufacturer	Bell Helicopter Textron	Bell Helicopter Textron
Serial Number	A-2047	A-2066
Part Number	222-016-001-139M	222-016-001-139M
Hours since New	1785	1709
Hours since Overhaul	N/A	N/A

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2.6.5 The aircraft was equipped with the following serviceable equipment:

- Dual auto flight system
- Ground Proximity Warning System (GPWS)
- Automatic Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT)

2.7 Meteorological Information

2.7.1 The pilot obtained weather information from Air Traffic Control at Harare's Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport.

2.7.2 General outlook

The Zimbabwe Meteorological Services Department (MSD) issued a severe weather advisory covering September 29 to October 01, 2026. The country was actively experiencing cloudy and windy weather during and beyond the period of the crash:

- Prevailing Weather: The MSD warned of widespread thunderstorms, lightning, and strong wind gusts, with localized downpours expected to exceed 30mm across the country.
- Cloud ceiling & Visibility: Regular airport observations around Harare reported broken to overcast cloud covers at exceptionally low ceilings (around 1,500 to 2,000 feet).
- Wind Direction and Speed: Surface winds at the nearest stations were blowing from the east/east-southeast at 8 to 11 knots, with variable directional shifts and significantly higher gust speeds associated with the passing storm cells.
- General Visibility: Classified as "mostly cloudy" with afternoon drops of rain, with visibility fluctuating heavily depending on the vicinity of localized downpours.

2.7.3 Marondera

The following weather conditions persisted on Wednesday 30 September 2026:

- 1600 hours local time 67887 42575 8//// 10147 20129 3//// 48/// 885// 88620=
- 1700 hours local time 67877 41575 8//// 10136 20130 3//// 48/// 75052 885// 333 5//// 88620=

At 1700 hours it was overcast at 2000 feet with light drizzle visibility was good 20km then at 1815 hours the weather deteriorated; there was Fog and drizzle.



Figure 2.3: Still image of conditions at Marondera Aerodrome at 14:51z.



Figure 2.4: Still image of conditions at Marondera Aerodrome at 15:01z.



Figure 2.5: Still image of conditions at Marondera Aerodrome at 15:46z.



Figure 2.6: Still image of conditions at Marondera Aerodrome at 15:51z.

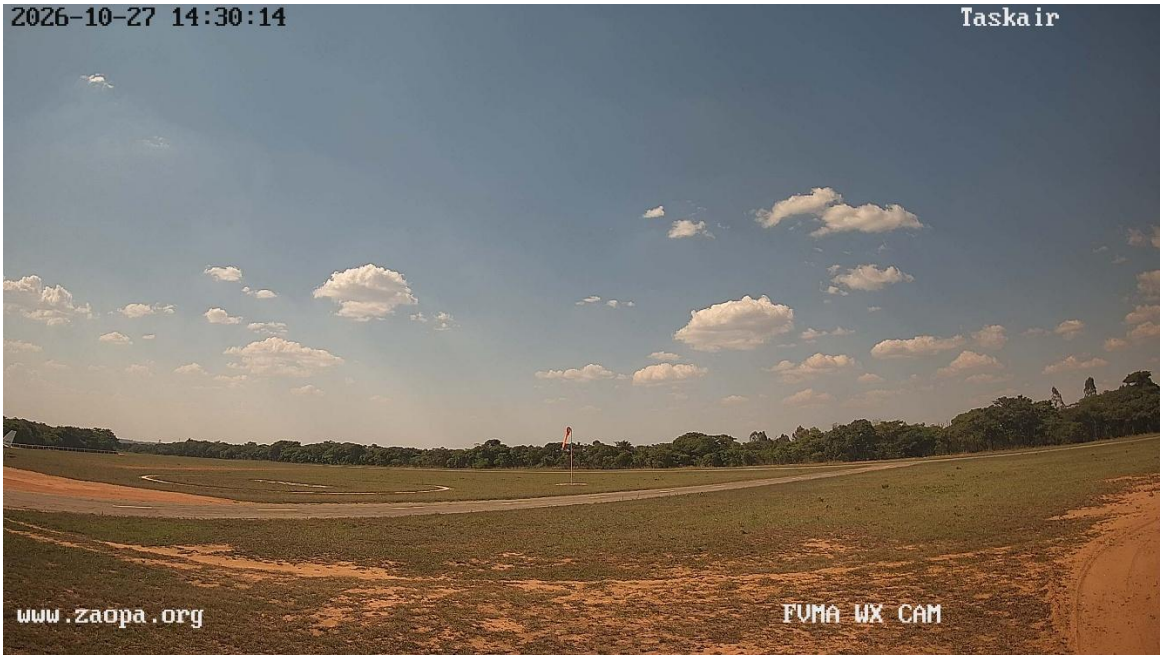


Figure 2.7: Still image of Marondera Aerodrome on a different day showing scattered clouds and excellent visibility.

Witness statements describe meteorological conditions around the crash site at the time of the accident as drizzling with heavy fog and extremely poor visibility. The conditions match closely those captured in *Fig 2.5*.

2.8 Aids to Navigation

The aircraft was equipped with a serviceable dual auto flight system, flight management system, weather radar and global positioning system.

Additionally, an iPad with SkyDemon, (flight-planning and in-flight navigation software) was provided for use by the flight crew.

2.9 Communications

The aircraft was equipped with standard communication equipment as approved by the Regulatory Authority which includes the Bendix King 6400. Contact with controllers at Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport remained consistent and without complication.

2.10 Aerodrome Information

2.10.1 Departure Aerodrome

There is no aerodrome located at the point of departure in Gandami Village. Accordingly, facilities and equipment normally associated with aerodromes was not present.

2.10.2 Destination Aerodrome

There is no aerodrome at the intended destination in Marondera. Accordingly, facilities and equipment normally associated with aerodromes was not present.

2.11 Flight Recorders

The aircraft was fitted with a Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR). However, the CVR was not recovered among the wreckage and is presumed to have been destroyed.

2.12 Wreckage and Impact Information

The wreckage was contained within an area measuring 170metres long and 75metres wide. From the initial point of impact with the ground, most of the wreckage was contained in a debris field that formed a narrow conical/funnel shape along the direction of the travel.

Distribution of key wreckage components, including elements from all four structural extremities and the powerplant, confirms the aircraft remained intact until impact. There is no evidence of an in-flight breakup or pre-impact explosion.



Figure 2.8: Initial point of impact and wreckage trail.



Figure 2.9: Overview of the accident site and debris field.

From the initial point of contact with the ground:

- Tail rotor sub-assemblies, including one half of one blade, were located 10metres along the direction of travel.
- The tail boom came to rest 84.7metres in the direction of travel,
- The main rotor hub assembly, including the main rotor blades and main gearbox, were located 140metres along the direction of travel
- What remained of the fuselage, together with the two engines were located 145metres along the direction travel,
- The furthest piece of wreckage was located 170metres along the direction of travel.

2.13 Medical and Pathological Information

There is no evidence that physiological factors or incapacitation affected the performance of flight crew member.

2.14 Fire

There was evidence of post-crash fire along the debris path. Burn patterns are indicative of a fuel-fed fire.



Figure 2.10: Fire damage to part of the remaining upper fuselage and engines.

2.15 Survival Aspects

The accident was not survivable due to the magnitude of the deceleration forces and the severity of the post-impact fire. All occupants were ejected from the aircraft just after the initial point of impact when the fuselage disintegrated.

2.16 Tests and Research

Test, research and analysis results will be included in the Final Accident Investigation Report

2.17 Organizational and Management Information

No deficiencies or discrepancies have been identified regarding the organization's management of the aircraft and its operation.

3 PROGRESS OF INVESTIGATION

The investigation into the aircraft accident at Kudenga Farm, Mashonaland East Province, has made significant progress in gathering factual information related to the accident. To date, the investigation has:

- Gathered Accident Details: Collected and documented information and evidence pertaining to the accident, including site details, personnel and aircraft information, photography and videography of the wreckage.
- Wreckage Recovery: The aircraft wreckage was recovered to a secure facility for further examination.
- Gathered Crew and Passenger Information: Collected information on crew and passengers, including nationalities, qualifications and licenses held.
- Gathered aircraft records: Aircraft records including safety oversight records have been collected from the Regulatory Authority and the aircraft operator. While copies of the latest maintenance records from the Approved Maintenance Organisation (AMO) have

been obtained, investigators will travel to the AMO for a detailed inspection of the full set of aircraft maintenance records.

- Interviews: Initial interviews with the crew of Z-OSM, eyewitnesses and first responders were conducted.

A final report will be issued once the investigation is complete, providing a comprehensive analysis of the accident and recommendations for safety improvements.

Report Produced by:
Ministry of Transport and Infrastructural Development
Air Accidents and Incidents Investigation Department (AAIID)
ZIMBABWE