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**AIR ACCIDENT
INVESTIGATION UNIT**

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PRELIMINARY ACCIDENT REPORT

This is preliminary information, subject to change, and may contain errors. Any errors in this Report will be corrected when the Final Report has been completed.

1. AIRCRAFT MANUFACTURER:	Agusta
Model:	A109E
State of Registry:	Ireland
Registration:	EI-SBM
Serial Number:	11174
Year of Manufacture:	2004
2. OPERATOR:	Premier Aviation
3. TYPE OF OPERATION:	Private
4. DATE / TIME:	20 March 2008 @ 15.42 hrs
5. POSITION OF OCCURRENCE:	Lagore, Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath
6. PERSONS ON BOARD:	Crew: 1 Passengers: None
7. INJURIES:	Crew: 1 (Serious)
8. DAMAGE:	Aircraft Destroyed
9. INVESTIGATOR-IN-CHARGE:	Mr Frank Russell

EI-SBM was on a Special Visual Flight Rules (SVFR) flight from Celtic Heliport, Knocksedan, Co. Dublin to Weston Airport, Co. Kildare. The Pilot was the sole occupant of the helicopter. The weather conditions were suitable for this short flight.

Dublin Air Traffic Control (ATC) instructed the Pilot to route via the Dublin VOR, Ashbourne and Dunshaughlin, not above 1,000 ft and to squawk 0433. En route, the Pilot advised ATC that he was approaching Dunshaughlin. Shortly thereafter, he advised ATC that he was “experiencing some difficulty” and then, almost immediately, reported that he would have to make an emergency landing and declared a “MAYDAY”. This was his last transmission to ATC.

The Pilot reported hearing a loud bang from the rear of the helicopter and then lost directional control as it began to turn uncontrollably to starboard. He initiated an autorotation, shut down the two engines and lowered the undercarriage.

The helicopter crash landed in soft boggy ground just east of Dunshaughlin and fell over on its left side. The helicopter was severely damaged. There was no fire. The Pilot extricated himself from the helicopter and lay injured on the ground until the emergency services arrived. The emergency services had been alerted by Dublin ATC following the “MAYDAY” transmission. A Coastguard Helicopter airlifted the seriously injured Pilot to hospital in Drogheda. The local Gardaí sealed off the accident site pending the arrival of two Inspectors of Air Accidents.

On arrival these Inspectors carried out an initial technical investigation and found a foreign object in the tail rotor driveshaft tunnel. This object, of cloth material, was entangled in the tail rotor driveshaft, between the first and second bearings. The driveshaft had failed just forward of the second bearing, which resulted in the drive to the tail rotor being disconnected. Initial indications are that the foreign object was causal to the shaft failure. The Investigation is focusing on the failure mechanism of the shaft and the origin of the foreign object.

The Investigation is ongoing and a Final Report will be published in due course.

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