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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:	SIKORSKY	
Model:	S-76B	
State of Registry:	United States	
Registration:	N399BH	
Serial Number:	760311	
Year of Manufacture:	1985	
2. OPERATOR:	Private Owner	
3. TYPE OF OPERATION:	General Aviation (Business)	
4. DATE / TIME:	18 September 2008 @ 15.41 hrs UTC	
5. POSITION OF OCCURRENCE:	Bettystown, Co. Meath	
6. PERSONS ON BOARD:	Crew: 1	Passengers: Nil
7. INJURIES:	Crew: 1	Others: 2
8. DAMAGE:	Helicopter destroyed	
9. INVESTIGATOR-IN-CHARGE:	Paddy Judge	

The helicopter had earlier landed and shutdown on a nearby beach where 2 passengers alighted. The helicopter was then repositioned by the Pilot, the only occupant, to a nearby car park in the centre of the village of Bettystown. This was due to his concerns regarding the increasing number of sightseers gathering around the helicopter. The car park was originally part of a hotel complex and was located at an approximate distance of 100 metres from the original landing position on the beach.

As the helicopter performed a vertical "tower" descent into the confined car park, the left hand rear side of the main rotor disk struck a 6 metre high lamppost. The initial contact was with the light fitting on top of the lamppost, followed by a more substantial contact with its supporting steel pole. The helicopter then rotated clockwise and rolled to the left. Its main rotor disintegrated on ground contact, while the tail rotor hit a low wall.

The helicopter immediately caught fire after ground impact. The Pilot managed successfully to exit the helicopter unaided. Two bystanders suffered minor injuries. All three were taken to hospital for examination and were released a short time later. Considerable collateral damage occurred when flying debris from the helicopter hit nearby properties and cars.

The Emergency Fire Services responded in a timely manner and extinguished the fire.

The Investigation has not identified any technical problem with the helicopter to date.

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

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