

NORTH CAROLINA Lawyers Weekly

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■ OCTOBER 16, 2025

VERDICTS & SETTLEMENTS

Charlotte helicopter crash leads to eight-figure settlement \$50 MILLION SETTLEMENT

Action: Settlement

Date: Sept. 16, 2025

Date of incident: Nov. 22, 2022

Nature of claim: Wrongful death

Amount: \$50 million

Case name: Jillian Ann Myers v.
TTWN Media Networks, LLC et al.

Case number: 23 CVS 4071

Court: Mecklenburg County
Superior Court

Name of judge: Forrest D. Bridges

Demand: \$50 million

Attorneys: Will Owen, of
Musselwhite, Musselwhite, Branch
& Grantham, Lumberton, and Gary
Robb, Anita Robb and Andrew
Robb, of Robb & Ribb, Kansas City
(for the plaintiff); Bill Starr, of
Baker Donaldson, Charlotte

Insurance carrier: National
Union Fire Insurance Co.

The decedent, 41, was a married father of four working as a meteorologist for WBTV. He was the sole passenger on a simulated news training flight in a Robinson R44 helicopter that crashed Nov. 22, 2022, adjacent to Interstate 77 in Mecklenburg County. He and the pilot died in the crash.

The helicopter was owned and maintained by the defendant, and the pilot was employed by the defendant.

About five minutes into the flight, the helicopter began a series of 360-degree rotational orbits over I-77 then entered into a steep descent and crashed.

The cause of the crash was inadequate inspections, resulting in an eventual loosening of hardware and subsequent loss of helicopter control. A post-crash examination of the flight controls revealed that the left forward control rod end connection to the stationary swashplate flange became disconnected during the flight, causing a total loss of control.

It was later determined that defendant's chief mechanic had ig-

nored multiple service letters from Robinson Helicopters concerning the overhaul and replacement of nuts on the forward control rod ends that were susceptible to corrosion and cracking. The helicopter also had been on 29 flights without the mechanic ever inspecting it in person. Additional post-collision examinations revealed that one of the two spacers were installed backwards, most likely during the field overhaul of the helicopter about three years before the fatal flight. The subject hardware was required to be inspected by the pilot during each preflight inspection and by maintenance personnel at each 100 hour/annual inspection.

Defendant's experts also admitted during their depositions that the helicopter "was not airworthy" on the day of the crash.

The total amount of the court-approved final judgment was \$126,287,671. The defendant assigned its breach of contract rights against the excess carriers to the plaintiff as part of the \$50 million settlement.