Ref: 7207

SOUTH AFRICAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY

ACCIDENT REPORT – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Date of Accident	5 June 2000	**Time of Accident**		0730Z	
Aircraft Registration	**ZS-RRB**	**Type of Aircraft**		**Agusta 109K2**	
Pilot-in-command Licence Type		Airline Transport (ATP)		**Licence Valid**	Yes
Pilot-in-command Flying Experience		Total Flying Hours	2490	Total Hours on Type	204.6
Type of Operation		Commercial			
Last point of departure		Richards Bay			
Next point of intended landing		Richards Bay			

Location of the accident site with reference to easily defined geographical points (plus GPS readings if possible)

On the deck of the ship (MV Ambassador - 3 nm offshore. (S28°48' – E032°08')

Meteorological Information	Weather was fine				
Number of people on board	1+2	**No. of people injured**	0	**No. of people killed**	1

Synopsis

On 4 June 2000 at approximately 0630Z the personnel at Balmoral Central Contracts received a call to transport a passenger (marine pilot), by helicopter, to an incoming ship.

The helicopter, with the crew consisting of the pilot-in-command, a co-pilot as an observer pilot and a flight engineer/winchman, departed the Balmoral premises in order to collect the passenger (marine pilot) (from the Richards Bay harbor) for the transfer.

During the approach the helicopter pilot contacted the ship (Ambassador) and informed the captain that he is en-route to the ship. The helicopter approached the ship from the East and flew along the right hand side of the ship in order for the pilot to inspect the landing area. The landing area was clearly marked on the hatch cover and the pilot identified it by the letter "H" inside a circle.

The pilot then circled and approached the landing area from the North-North-East, for the landing. Throughout the approach and landing the pilot and the engineer confirmed that there was no one near the landing area.

After landing the passenger (marine pilot) disembarked the helicopter and cleared the landing area to the right hand corner of the hatch/landing area and climbed down onto the deck of the ship. Just prior to take-off the pilot experienced a severe vibration and at the same time the engineer told the pilot to shut down the engines as one of the ship's crewmembers had walked into the tail rotor.

Probable Cause

The most probable cause for this accident can be attributed to the fact that the 3rd officer attempted to pass underneath the tailboom of the helicopter and at the last second saw the antennae and tried to avoid it, causing him to contact the tail rotor blades.

A major contributing factor to this accident is the lack of communication and/or training of the ship's crew in relation to helicopter operations. Other contributing factors include the aerial that is not highly visible, the blades that appeared shorter as a result of the colour scheme and the crewmember not wearing a headset with the radio transceiver.