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Sawyer said he saw the blades slow and the helicopter fall from the air. The helicopter bounced, then flipped over, Sawyer said.

"I was worried that it was going to blow up and I didn't want to fan the flames," Sawyer said. He flew around the wreckage and landed just west of it. Cavanaugh jumped from the helicopter and raced to the victims, along with at least a dozen workers from nearby Jet Aviation.

"We weren't thinking of being heroes," said Benjamin Santiago, a Jet Aviation worker who helped pull the injured from the wreckage. "The engines were running and there were flames, we were just thinking of getting them out."

Renison, Grover and Evans were flown to St. Mary's Medical Center. Anderson and Barrett were taken there by ambulance.

Renison, Anderson, 59, of Tequesta, and Grover, were in critical condition in the intensive care unit on Tuesday night. Barrett, 36, of West Palm Beach, and Evans, 36, of Jupiter, were in serious condition.

Witnesses said one man was thrown from the wreckage. They pulled the remaining survivors from the helicopter but Renison was trapped inside, strapped into his seat and partially pinned under the wreckage. The workers from Jet Aviation cut Renison free and lifted the mangled cabin before removing him moments later.

In performance reviews, Renison's bosses praised him for displaying "exceptional judgment" and "the highest professional standards."

"Tom pays particularly close attention to maintenance and safety requirements," read one review from January.

His bosses especially praised his handling of a December 1992 incident in which a vulture flew into the windshield of a helicopter he was flying over the Everglades, forcing him to land. Neither Renison nor his two passengers suffered serious injuries in that incident, district spokesman John Neuharth said.

*[From The Palm Beach Post, Wednesday, April 9, 1997. Staff writers Robert P. King and Lynn Brackman contributed to this story.]*