Civil Aviation Authority

SAFETY DIRECTIVE

Number: SD–2015/004

Issued: 30 November 2015

Offshore Helicopter Operations

At Annex 1 to this Safety Directive is an Operational Directive mandating action that is required to restore an acceptable level of safety. The Operational Directive is issued in accordance with Article 15 of the Air Navigation Order 2009.

Recipients must ensure that this Directive is copied to all members of their staff who need to take appropriate action or who may have an interest in the information (including any 'in-house' or contracted maintenance organisation and relevant outside contractors).

Applicability:	
Aerodromes:	Not primarily affected
Air Traffic:	Not primarily affected
Airspace:	Not primarily affected
Airworthiness:	Not primarily affected
Flight Operations:	All AOC Helicopter Operators Conducting Offshore Operations
Licensed Personnel:	Not primarily affected

1 Introduction

1.1 This Safety Directive (SD) promulgates the Operational Directive (see **Annex 1**) issued by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on 30 November 2015, replacing that issued on 14 October 2014, and is applicable to operators conducting offshore Public Transport (PT) or Commercial Air Transport (CAT) helicopter operations in support of: offshore oil, gas and mineral exploration, production, storage and transport; the offshore renewable energy industry; sea-pilot transfer; and the marine light authorities.

1.2 Following concerns raised by recent helicopter accidents in the seas around the UK, the CAA conducted a Safety Review of Offshore Public Transport Helicopter Operations in association with the Norwegian CAA and the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). The report of the review was published in **CAP 1145** and a progress report on actions and recommendations arising is at **CAP 1243**.

1.3 This SD supersedes SD-2015/001 and covers the revised Operational Directive which includes provision for the carriage of medically incapacitated passengers and the extension of relevance to offshore marine light support.

2 Reason and Explanation

2.1 This SD is made in the interests of passenger safety and survivability for the reasons set out in Chapter 9 of CAP 1145.

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2.2 The review identified areas of passenger survivability that needed addressing including improving the prospects of rescue following a ditching, together with mitigating the consequences of capsize. This Directive requires action to be taken by helicopter operators in line with this principle and will be kept under review by the CAA Offshore Safety Action Group that has been established, under the chairmanship of the Director Safety and Airspace Regulation Group, as a result of the review.

3 Implementation

3.1 The CAA has worked with Oil and Gas UK and the helicopter operators to facilitate the introduction and approval of appropriate Emergency Breathing Systems (EBS) for use by passengers. The aim to establish the integration of appropriate systems with other elements of survival equipment, such as life jackets and immersion suits, and to ensure that any necessary training was formulated and implemented has been achieved. Through significant effort and cooperation, EBS meeting the Category A specification of **CAP 1034** has been developed and distributed.

3.2 JAR-OPS 3.837(a)(6) required that all doors, windows or other openings, in their specific helicopter passenger compartments, identified as suitable for the purpose of underwater escape and that are equipped so as to be operable in an emergency be authorised by the authority; this requirement is now covered under CAT.IDE.H.310(f). The CAA has worked with the helicopter operators to achieve these authorisations. **CAP 562** (Civil Aviation Airworthiness Information and Procedures), Book 2, Leaflet 44-30 (Helicopter Emergency Escape Facilities) provides guidance on interpretation of the requirements and recommended standards for emergency escape facilities for use should the helicopter capsize after a ditching (but see **Annex 3** for revised wording). Operators of foreign registered helicopters should seek authorisation through their own national aviation authorities.

3.3 Due to concerns about the wider impact on the safety of the offshore industry as a whole that the seating restrictions of Action A8 of CAP 1145 would impose, the CAA delayed the implementation from 1 June to 1 September 2014. However, the intention to require all occupants to have EBS available from 1 April 2016 (Action A10) was partially brought forward with all passengers required to have EBS by 1 January 2015; the all occupants requirement remains as 1 April 2016 which in effect means that the flight crew will also require EBS by then. These dates were incorporated into the Operational Directive in October 2014.

3.4 The CAA, working in conjunction with EASA, the helicopter manufacturers and the operators, clarified the ditching certification basis for all offshore helicopter types. This information was necessary for the operators to apply the requirements of Action A6 regarding limitation of flight over water with sea conditions above those of the helicopter demonstrated ditching performance. Implementation for this restriction was achieved by 1 September 2014. During this period, EASA consulted on Airworthiness Directives (ADs) covering the same subject. Subsequently, ADs have been issued for offshore helicopter types effective from 1 September 2014 with the requirement to be implemented within three months of that date and which is now effective.

3.5 In identifying the condition of the sea over which an offshore flight might be expected to travel, operators are to have procedures that use the most appropriate and available information. This process should at least include accessing the sea surface information provided by the UK Met Office and should encapsulate both current and forecast conditions. The CAA expects that the Significant Wave Height (SWH) information for the entire route (to offshore destination, any inter-rig or location sectors and return journey) provided by the UK Met Office will be used for planning and at the departure decision stage only. Once departed, the flight should continue at the commander's discretion and in accordance with the operator's procedures. SWH parameters are taken from the World Meteorological Organisation sea state codes.

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4 Extension of Applicability

4.1 The focus of the original SD was aimed at the more established area of offshore operations in support of the oil and gas industry. However, other sectors of PT/CAT helicopter aviation that have a substantial proportion of any flight conducted over open sea areas are exposed to similar hazards and risk. **Regulation (EU) No. 965/2012** (Air Operations) already includes sea-pilot transfer within the scope of offshore operations (this applied from 28 October 2014) and support for the renewable energy industry will be included within the amendment to the regulation by the introduction of the Specific Approval (SPA) for Offshore Helicopter Operations (HOFO) as promulgated in EASA **Opinion-04/2015**.

4.2 The CAA is keeping the requirements of this SD under review and has determined to align its applicability with the UK application of Regulation (EU) No. 965/2012 and any amendments arising from the introduction of HOFO.

4.3 Consequently, the CAA decided that the provisions of this SD should be extended to operators of offshore operations in support of sea-pilot transfer and the renewable energy industry. This was introduced in the amended SD in October 2014 with a scheduled timescale for the application of the various elements of the requirements. Allowance was given to the need for new and compatible lifejacket/EBS equipment, particularly with a view to helicopter hoist operations, to become available. Support for marine lights was considered at that time but it was decided to delay any decision pending clarification of the progress of SPA.HOFO work. Although not now specifically mentioned as a relevant activity in SPA.HOFO, the similarity of hazards and risks with other offshore operations makes it necessary to include the support service within the scope of the SD and the Operational Directive has been amended accordingly.

4.4 Additionally, it has become clear that the requirements of CAT.IDE.H.310 for offshore flights in a hostile sea area where all persons on board are to wear life jackets and, in certain conditions survival suits, cannot always be applied as in the case of medically incapacitated passengers. SPA.HOFO recognises this and indeed a late amendment has been accepted to address such situations including the wearing of EBS. Until SPA.HOFO is applicable, alleviation from the rules has been sought and a similar alleviation is necessary for the wearing of EBS within this Directive. This has been introduced at paragraph 10 of the Operational Directive.

5 Interpretation

5.1 As well as the definitions in the Operational Directive at **Annex 1**, **Annex 2** includes extracts of relevant UK legislation.

6 Queries

6.1 Any queries or requests for further guidance from AOC holders as a result of this communication should be addressed to the assigned Flight Operations Inspector in the first instance.

6.2 Otherwise, queries should be addressed to the following e-mail address: **ISPOperationsManagementTeam@caa.co.uk**.

7 Cancellation

7.1 This Directive will remain in force until revoked by the CAA.

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