



IHST

International Helicopter Safety Team

Our Vision: An International Civil Helicopter Community With Zero Accidents

HELICOPTER FACTS

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7 Safety Tips That Every Helicopter Pilot Needs to Follow

Summertime flight operations are coming in North America and Europe, and for helicopter pilots, this usually means an upward spike in accidents. When warmer weather arrives in May, helicopter operations and missions increase and the number of accidents rise right along with them. In addition, fatal accidents reach their peak in the “dog days” of July and August. Hopefully, this year can buck the annual trend. To help reduce accidents, listed here are seven safety tips from the International Helicopter Safety Team (www.IHST.org) that every helicopter pilot should follow so that this critical summer season is a safer one.

Get in the habit of using pre-departure check lists – All pilots should use a simple checklist to ensure that they and their helicopters are ready to operate properly. The checklist should include complete weather and fuel information, details about the helicopter equipment, helicopter performance and the task at hand, and a list of required documents for the operation. Find a sample checklist here: <http://easa.europa.eu/essi/ehest/category/publication-type/leaflet/page/2/>

Use the IMSAFE checklist to ensure you are fit to fly – Ask yourself about any illness (however slight), medication, stress, alcohol, fatigue, hydration and recent diet. Find it here: <http://www.ihst.org/Default.aspx?tabid=3051&language=en-US>

Conduct a personal risk analysis before each flight – Before each mission, every pilot should ask: “Does the proposed task present safety risks? What is the probability of a mishap? Are the risks worth taking?” Sometimes the wisest choice is to just turn around or land, even in a field or an open parking lot. (*Land and Live!*) Being asked questions by federal authorities such as the FAA or NTSB is better than having family members answers those questions on your behalf. Here is an example of a Flight/Ground Risk Assessment Tool: <https://easa.europa.eu/essi/ehest/2012/06/pre-departure-check-list/>

Don't take risks in questionable weather – Attention pilots: Avoid flying into fog or stormy weather. Of course, this is common sense that every pilot knows. However, every year, federal investigators deal with scores of helicopter accidents (often fatal) caused by pilots who took risks in bad weather. Pressing onward into a storm is never a good idea. Many IHST Safety Bulletins address this topic: <http://www.ihst.org/Default.aspx?tabid=3089&language=en-US>

Don't fly lower than 1,000 feet above ground level – To avoid wires, trees and other obstacles, fly no lower than 1,000 feet above ground level (AGL) whenever possible. Even the most experienced helicopter pilots need to be vigilant about this risk and limit their exposure to it. Take a look at the HAI video “*Surviving the Wires Environment*”:

<https://www.rotor.com/Publications/HAIVideosLibrary/SurvivingtheWiresEnvironment.aspx>

If your mission includes flying low, operate with wire strike protection systems – Some helicopter pilots (such as aerial applicators) must fly low as part of their operation. In these cases, the aircraft should be equipped with a wire strike protection system to prevent emergency situations from occurring. Here's some brief information:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wire_strike_protection_system

At all cost, avoid complacency - Dust off your emergency procedures manual and read it again. Follow the rotorcraft flight manual's normal procedures. File a flight plan. Conduct a thorough preflight briefing among all flight participants. Follow standard operating procedures and your personal minimums. Are you aware of the Helicopter Pilots Model Code of Conduct? Find it here: <http://www.ihst.org/Default.aspx?tabid=3094&language=en-US>

This fact sheet has been adapted from a recent article in FAA Safety Briefing written by Gene Trainor
http://www.faa.gov/news/safety_briefing/

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