

Flight Safety at Eurocopter

Eurocopter today is the largest manufacturer of helicopters, and its products combining a high degree of innovation, modern technology and safety, register one of the lowest number of accidents compared to other helicopters. However, the company is determined to drive down the number even further.

With this view, Eurocopter established a flight safety directorate, headed by Mr. Jean-Pierre Dedieu. The directorate is based on three main areas and is tasked with initiating, coordinating and harmonizing all company actions related to flight safety.

“The Flight Safety directorate was created in response to a worldwide dynamic,” notes Mr. Dedieu. “As with the airline companies a few years back, there has recently been increased awareness among international aeronautical authorities, helicopter operators and manufacturers of the need to improve flight safety. The helicopter community has now decided to take concerted action to drastically reduce the incidence of fatal accidents over the next decade.”

The focus areas of the directorate are:

Technical & Maintenance sector

Initiate action plans following accidents attributed to technical causes. No. 1 priority is to reduce time between the accident analysis phase and the effective fleet-wide implementation of all technical modifications, as soon as each modification is deemed necessary.

Operations sector

Responsible for improving Eurocopter’s understanding of operational accidents and facilitating solution development. Particular emphasis is placed on:

- Proposing special training to pilots in accessible locations and at competitive rates, as per the Group training policy, with the aim of minimizing accidents attributed to human factors. An example of this would be the recent Eurocopter endorsement of the CHL Mountain Training course in Penticton, British Columbia
- providing operators with equipment such as flight recorders and obstacle detectors; encouraging pilots to fly according to the OEM’s standards, as well as improving flight control aids

Corporate Affairs sector

- identify, coordinate, and develop action plans so that Eurocopter and its employees can manage the consequences of helicopter accidents in an appropriate manner
- implement a more structured crisis management process
- improve communication and participation with international authorities such as the International Helicopter Safety Team (IHST)
- encourage operators to do their part in improving flight safety by fitting helicopters with operational equipment such as obstacle detectors, and increasing survivability; improve training for crew and maintenance personnel (which could possibly reduce insurance premiums for operators)

In addition, Eurocopter continues to partner with its suppliers for enhanced flight safety. One such initiative has been the recently unveiled and jointly developed ALERTS Vision 1000 – the most recent extension of Appareo’s award winning ALERTS product line. The system was developed to provide operators throughout the helicopter industry with access to a flight data

monitoring solution to enhance the management of their operations. The ALERTS Vision 1000 combines cockpit imaging, GPS/INS monitoring, cockpit ambient acoustic data and a flight data monitor into a single compact package.

ALERTS (Aircraft Logging and Event Recording for Training and Safety) is the first complete Flight Operations Quality Assurance (FOQA) solution for light and legacy aircraft. It allows operators of any size to dramatically improve flight safety and pilot performance through carefully tracking and analyzing large volumes of flight data.

In keeping with earlier ALERTS hardware, the ALERTS Vision 1000 is extremely small and lightweight, making installation possible in nearly any aircraft. Additionally, because the unit requires only aircraft power and ground to function, mounting the unit in an aircraft is a simple process. By adding high-resolution image and ambient acoustic capture abilities to Appareo's successful ALERTS FOQA system, Eurocopter and Appareo have made a significant contribution to increasing safe helicopter operation across the industry.

The ALERTS Vision 1000 will initially be certified under a Supplemental Type Certificate for the Eurocopter AS350-B2/B3. Certification is expected in late Q3 or early Q4 of 2009 with the first units being delivered and installed in early 2010.

Eurocopter Canada would be showcasing a brief presentation on the ALERTS Vision 1000 system as part of the technical and plenary sessions being held at HAC.

More information is available at the Eurocopter booth at HAC 2009.