

Section 2. Special Operations

10-2-1. Offshore Helicopter Operations

a. Introduction

The offshore environment offers unique applications and challenges for helicopter pilots. The mission demands, the nature of oil and gas exploration and production facilities, and the flight environment (weather, terrain, obstacles, traffic), demand special practices, techniques and procedures not found in other flight operations. Several industry organizations have risen to the task of reducing risks in offshore operations, including the Helicopter Safety Advisory Conference (HSAC) (<http://www.hsac.org>), and the Offshore Committee of the Helicopter Association International (HAI) (<https://rotor.org/>). The following recommended practices for offshore helicopter operations are based on guidance developed by HSAC for use in the Gulf of Mexico, and provided here with their permission. While not regulatory, these recommended practices provide aviation and oil and gas industry operators with useful information in developing procedures to avoid certain hazards of offshore helicopter operations.

NOTE-

Like all aviation practices, these recommended practices are under constant review. In addition to normal procedures for comments, suggested changes, or corrections to the AIM (contained in the Preface), any questions or feedback concerning these recommended procedures may also be directed to the HSAC through the feedback feature of the HSAC website (<http://www.hsac.org>).

b. Passenger Management on and about Heliport Facilities

1. Background. Several incidents involving offshore helicopter passengers have highlighted the potential for incidents and accidents on and about the heliport area. The following practices will minimize risks to passengers and others involved in heliport operations.

2. Recommended Practices

(a) Heliport facilities should have a designated and posted passenger waiting area which is clear of the heliport, heliport access points, and stairways.

(b) Arriving passengers and cargo should be unloaded and cleared from the heliport and access route prior to loading departing passengers and cargo.

(c) Where a flight crew consists of more than one pilot, one crewmember should supervise the unloading/loading process from outside the aircraft.

(d) Where practical, a designated facility employee should assist with loading/unloading, etc.

c. Crane-Helicopter Operational Procedures

1. Background. Historical experience has shown that catastrophic consequences can occur when industry safe practices for crane/helicopter operations are not observed. The following recommended practices are designed to minimize risks during crane and helicopter operations.

2. Recommended Practices

(a) Personnel awareness

(1) Crane operators and pilots should develop a mutual understanding and respect of the others' operational limitations and cooperate in the spirit of safety;

(2) Pilots need to be aware that crane operators sometimes cannot release the load to cradle the crane boom, such as when attached to wire line lubricators or supporting diving bells; and

(3) Crane operators need to be aware that helicopters require warm up before takeoff, a two-minute cool down before shutdown, and cannot circle for extended lengths of time because of fuel consumption.