



EUROPEAN AVIATION SAFETY AGENCY  
AGENCE EUROPÉENNE DE LA SÉCURITÉ AÉRIENNE  
EUROPÄISCHE AGENTUR FÜR FLUGSICHERHEIT



7<sup>th</sup> EASA Rotorcraft Symposium 2013  
4-5 Dec, Cologne, Germany

## The European Helicopter Safety Team (EHEST): 2013 Achievements and Plans



Prepared by M. Masson, EASA  
EHEST Secretary

Your safety is our mission.  
[easa.europa.eu](http://easa.europa.eu)

# International Helicopter Safety Team (IHST) European Helicopter Safety Team (EHEST)

John Black, EHOC

EHEST co-Chair

EHEST is the European component of the IHST

- Objective to reduce the civil helicopter accident rate by 80% by 2016

- Recently reformulated:

**Zero Tolerance  
Zero Accidents**

**IHST** International Helicopter Safety Team  
Our Goal is to Reduce the Civil Helicopter Accident Rate by 80% by 2016.

Home • About Us • Supporters • EHEST • Industry Links • Data • Reports • Insights • Presentations • Safety Tools • Calendar • Contact Us

Select Language

**IHST SAFETY TOOLS ARE FREE AND EASY TO USE.**  
*Click the photo for one of our toolkits.*

**Toolkits & Videos**

- Safety Management
- Training
- Technology/Data
- Maintenance
- Informational
- Take Survey

**IHST Reports**

- US JHSAT Compendium - Volume I
- US JHSAT Compendium - Volume II
- Canadian JHSAT Final Report
- EHEST Final Report 2000-2005
- EHEST 2008/2009 Preliminary Findings
- EHEST Final Report (French, German, Spanish)

**World Map Regions:** N. America, S. America, Europe, Middle East/Africa, Asia, Oceania

**Social Media:** Like Us (facebook), Follow Us (twitter), Talk to Us (Feedback), Watch Us (YouTube), Advisory Members

**Tweet:** IHST\_helicopter: IHST Insight: Flight Safety Foundation's #helicopter accident analysis involving loss of oil. Read it here: <http://t.co/cTNVCZHH>  
IHST\_helicopter: IHST Insight: Flight Safety Foundation's #helicopter accident analysis involving loss of oil. Read it here: <http://t.co/cTNVCZHH>  
IHST\_helicopter: IHST Friday Video (A mellow video) Watch #helicopter Aerial Application at work. Be

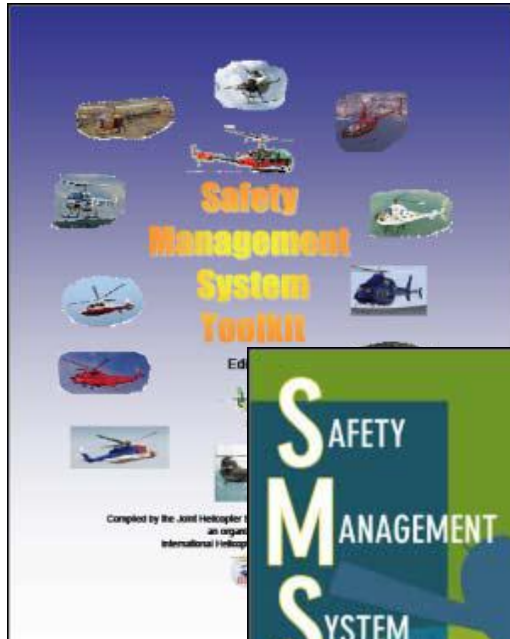


# IHST

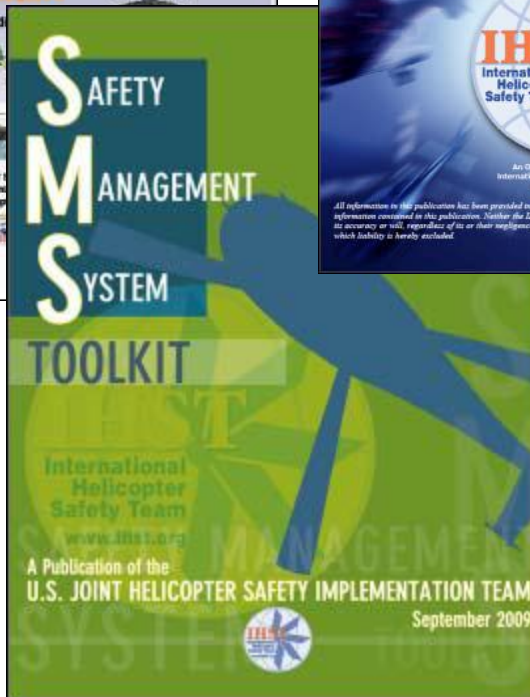
**International Helicopter Safety Team**

Our Vision: An International Civil Helicopter Community With Zero Accidents

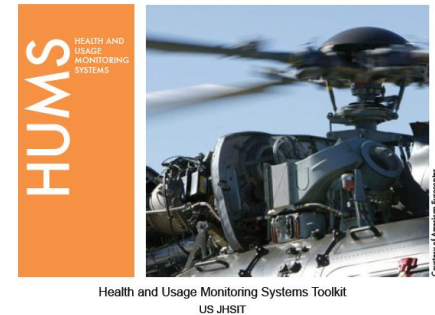
## SMS 1st Edition



## Edition 2



## Edition 2



**Translation of Toolkits  
in Progress**





# EHEST within the ESSI






CHC

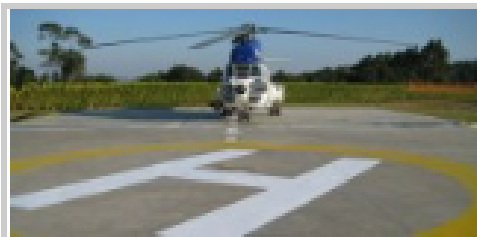


Safety Partnership with more than 50 organisations

## Enac: confronto e di dialogo con gli operatori di elicotteri

 Pubblicato il 19-07-2013 14:19:34

18 July 2013



«Una giornata di confronto e di dialogo con gli operatori di trasporto pubblico con elicotteri». Così l'Enac ha definito l'incontro da esso organizzato ieri, 18 luglio, in collaborazione con l'AEI-Associazione Elicotteristica Italiana e con interventi diretti di rappresentanti dell'industria. La relazione introduttiva della giornata è stata illustrata dal vice direttore generale

dell'Enac Benedetto Marasà, seguito dagli interventi del direttore centrale Standardizzazione Sicurezza Enac, Enea Guccini, del direttore Regolazione Navigabilità e Operazioni Enac, Marco Silanos, del presidente dell'AEI Gianmario Bettiga e da altri contributi. Il workshop, spiega l'Enac, è nato dall'esigenza del settore di prepararsi all'attuazione del Regolamento comunitario n. 965/2012 che stabilisce nuove norme relative sia alle operazioni commerciali di trasporto aereo effettuate con aeromobili e con elicotteri, sia sulle condizioni relative al rilascio, al mantenimento, alla modifica, alle limitazioni, alla sospensione o alla revoca dei certificati di operatori aerei.

 Pubblicato in: Industria, Istituzioni

# European Helicopter Safety Team (EHEST)

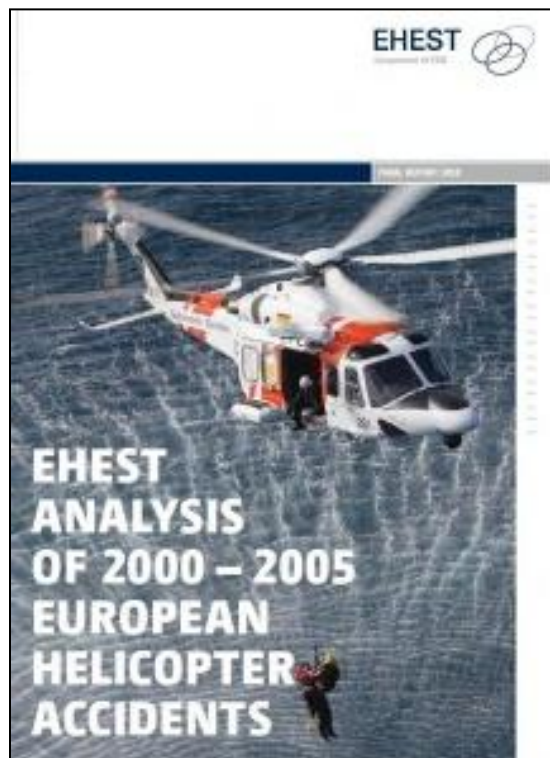
Martin Bernandersson, EASA

EHSAT Safety Analyst



# EHEST Analysis Report 2006-2010

- 2000-2005: 327 accidents analysed
- 2006-2010: 162 accidents analysed



## EHEST Report 2006-2010

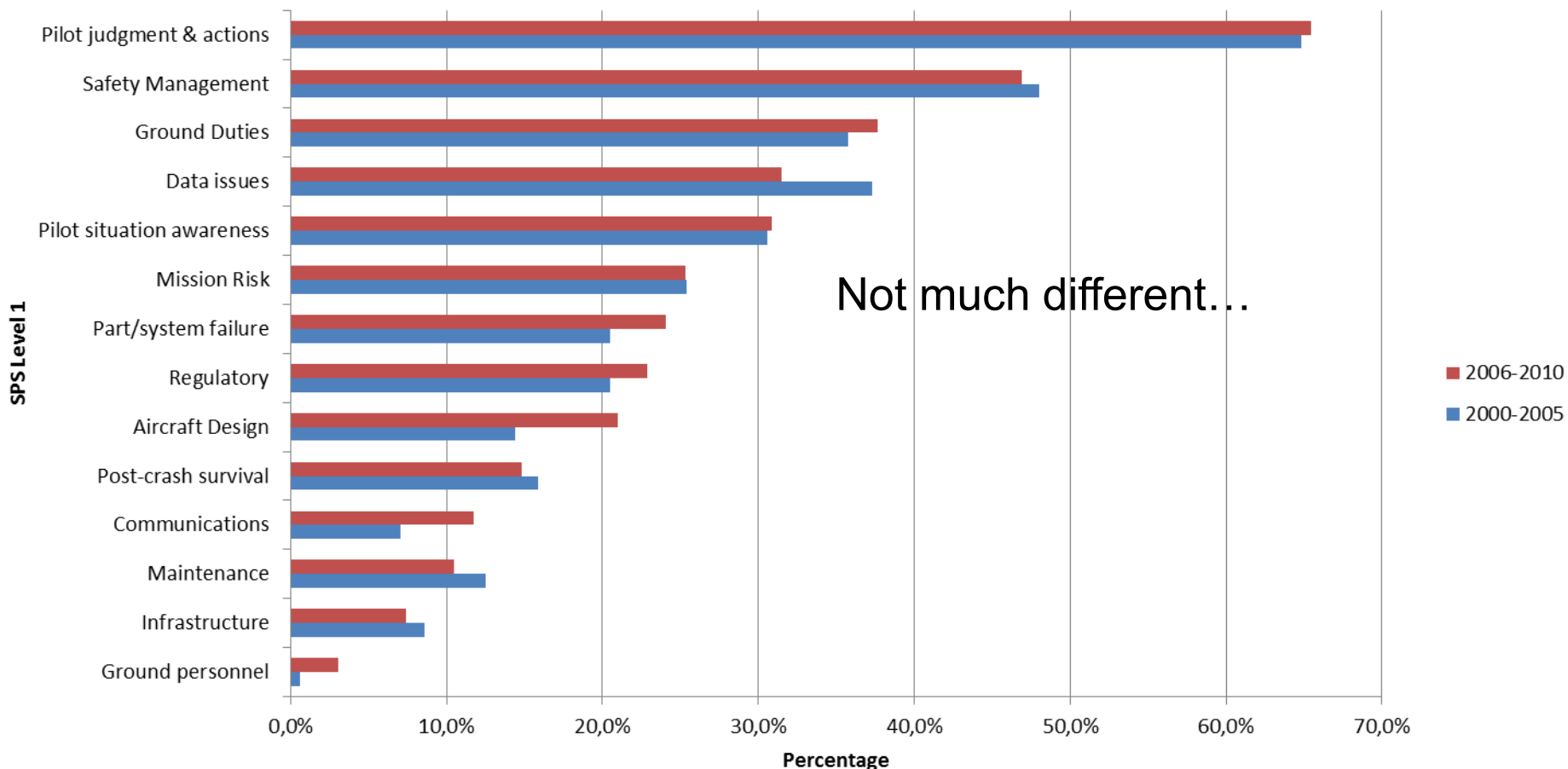
*In preparation,  
to be published  
in 2014*

*What's new?*

**Preview**

# What's new?

## Percentage of analysed accidents where SPS Level 1 was assigned at least once



# Preliminary Conclusions

- The analysis of the 2006-2010 accidents is globally consistent with the results from 2000-2005
- The new data continue supporting the safety actions taken based on the 2000-2005 data

# European Helicopter Safety Implementation Team (EHEST)

John Steel, Irish Aviation Authority

EHSIT co-Chair

IHST Director Europe

# From Analysis to Safety Action



... leading to the development of Action Plans and safety material

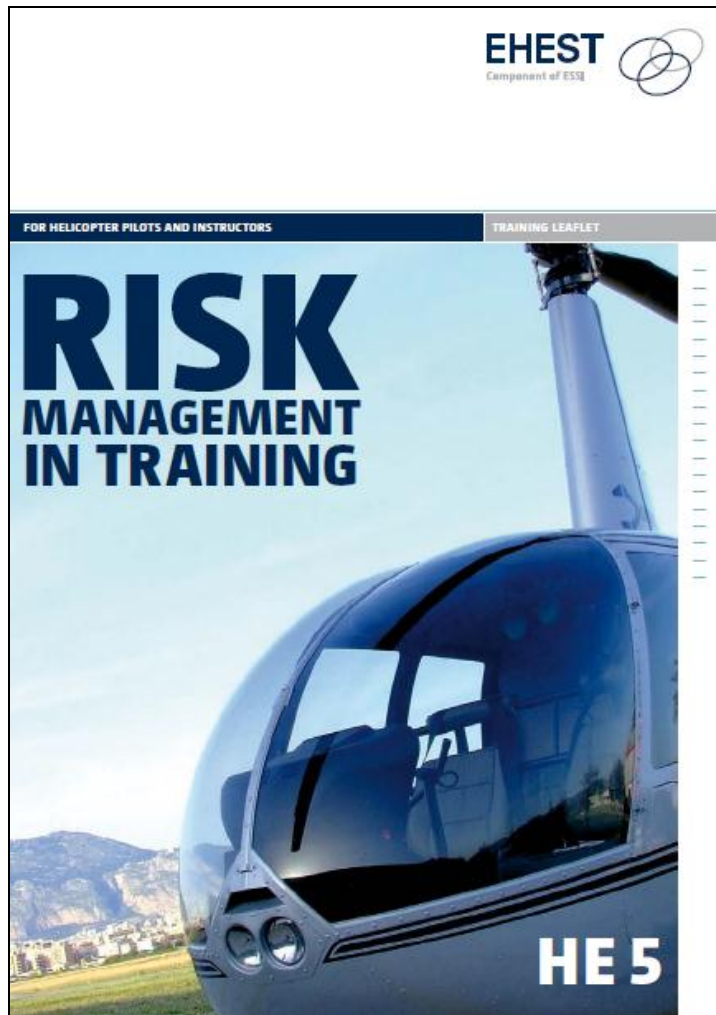


More than 300  
2000-2005  
accidents  
analysed...





# Most recent leaflets: HE5



Published March 2013

<https://easa.europa.eu/essi/ehest/main-page/training/>

# Most recent leaflets: HE6

Published June 2013

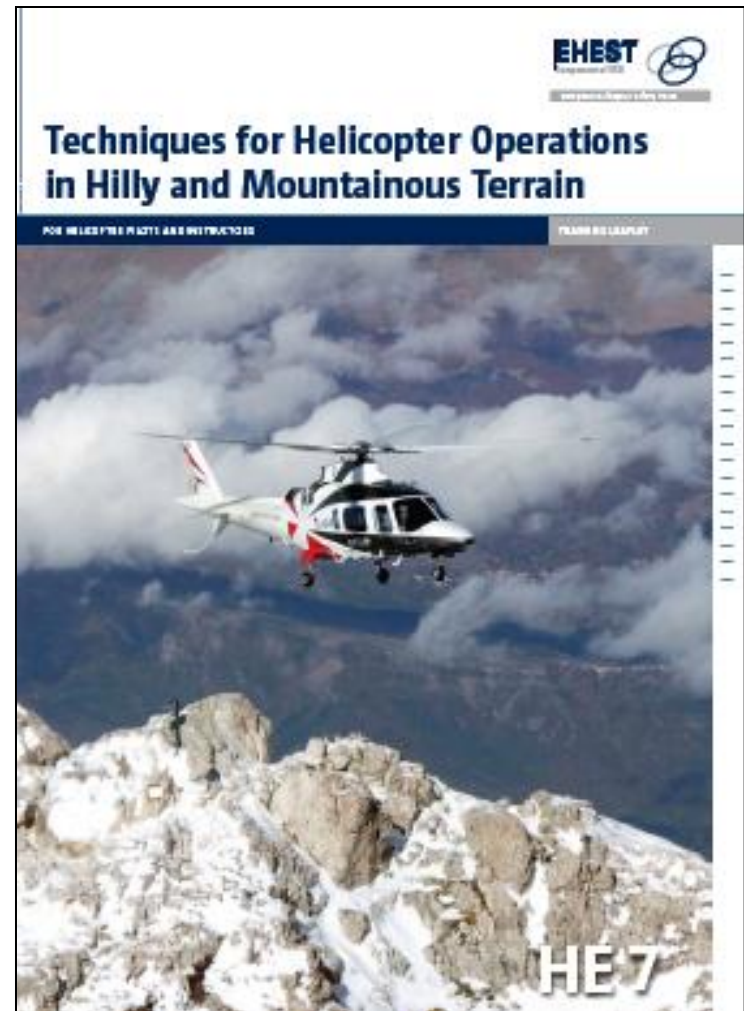
<https://easa.europa.eu/essi/ehest/main-page/training/>



# Most recent leaflets: HE7

Published March 2013

<https://easa.europa.eu/essi/ehest/main-page/training/>



# Most recent leaflets: GA7



Re-published Oct 2013

<https://easa.europa.eu/essi/ehest/main-page/training/>

Initially developed for Airplanes,  
also applies to Helicopters



## Video – Degraded Visual Environment and Loss of control

The EHSAT analysis shows that spatial disorientation is one major cause of accidents. This video was developed for EHEST by the French 'Institut pour l'Amélioration de la Sécurité Aérienne'.



[Degraded Visual Environment & Loss of Control](#) from [IASA Institut](#).

## Video – Passenger management

Version for Pilots



The video was produced by the [IASA Institut](#).



## CONSIDERAZIONI SULLA SICUREZZA

METODI PER MIGLIORARE LA COMPETENZA DEI PILOTI DI ELICOTTERO

OPUSCOLO TECNICO AGGIORNATO



## ПОЛОЖЕ ПО БЕЗОПАС

ПРЕДЛАГАЕТСЯ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКОЙ ВЕРТОЛЕТНОЙ ГРУППЕ  
И  
ООО «ЭЛАЙД ЭВИЭШН КО

# Translations


## Video – Spanish – Operating in the vicinity of electric utility infrastructure

The information presented in this video provides general safety guidelines related to operating aircraft in the vicinity of electric utility infrastructure.



 [Part 01 – 70 Mo](#)

 [Part 02 – 66 Mo](#)

 [Part 03 – 55 Mo](#)

This video was [originally produced in English by the US HAI](#) (Helicopter Association International) and was translated into Spanish by [INAER Aviation Spain](#).

# Safety Benefits of Technologies Presented at Avionics Europe and Helitech 2013



**Predictive ground  
 collision avoidance**



**Deployable System  
 for Crash-Load  
 Attenuation**



**Sensor based obstacle  
 and terrain avoidance**

## Safety Issues

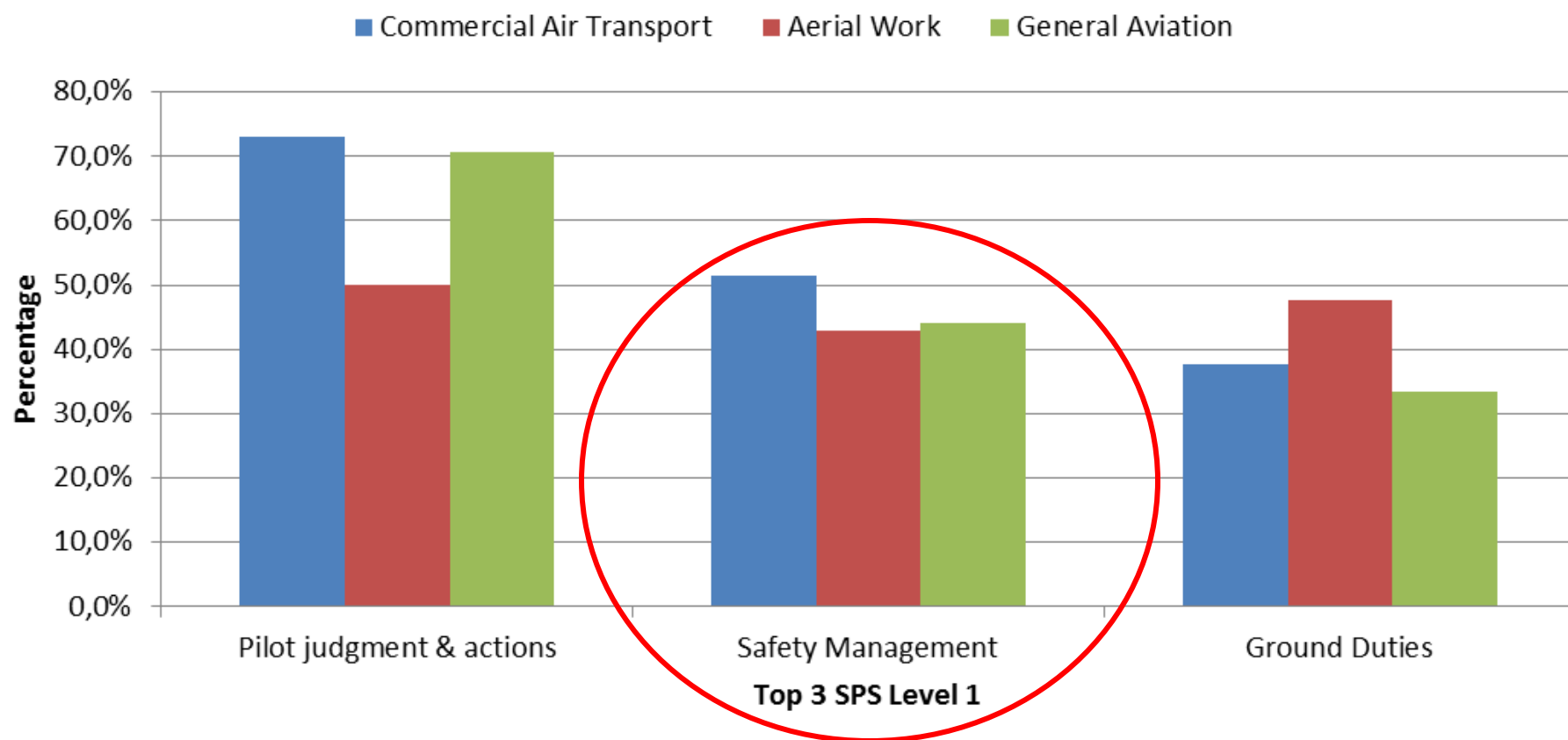
Technologies

		AH	AI	AJ	AK	AL	AM	AN	AO	AP	AQ	AR	AS	AT	AU	AV	AW	AX	AY	
	Import Technology	SPS																		Avionics Design (Item 2)
		Unsafe Acts Errors	Safety Management	Regulatory	Preconditions Condition of Individuals	Pilot situation awareness	Part / system failure	Mission Risk	Maintenance	Ground Duties	Avionics Design									
	Technology : SPS/CICT--	Skills based Errors	Judgement & Decision-Making Errors	Inadequate Pilot Experience Management	Overlight and Regulations (Regulation)	Accident Prevention	Cognitive Factors	Psychic Behavioural Factors	External Environmental Awareness	Visual/Weather	Human Factors - Pilot's Decision	Flight Profile	Procedure Implementation	Landing Procedures	Part/system failure - Aircraft	Terrain Obstacles	MX Procedures/Maintenance	Performance of MX Duties	Mission Planning	
9	goto Flight data evaluation and processing for accident investigation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
10	goto Deployable Voice and Flight Data Recorder	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
11	goto Miniature Voice and Flight Data Recorder TRIADE project	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
12	goto Cockpit Information Recorder	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
13	goto Flight Data Acquisition and Flight Data Monitoring	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
14	goto Full Authority Digital Engine Control	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
15	goto VIBRATION PASSPORT TECHNOLOGY FOR CONDITION MONITORING OF HELICOPTER ENGINES	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
16	goto Light helicopter HOMP systems	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
17	goto ALLFlight- Fusing sensor information to increase helicopter pilot's situation awareness	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
18	goto Enhanced Ground Proximity Warning System / Terrain Awareness and Warning System	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
19	goto Active laserbased obstacle and terrain avoidance system combined with passive data base system (ICD/AVC)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
20	User description Technologies - Safety Matrix	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
21	Technology database	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	

*150 technologies, 90 rated*

# Safety Management still ranks high!

## 2006-2010 - Percentage of Accidents where SPS Level 1 was identified at least once



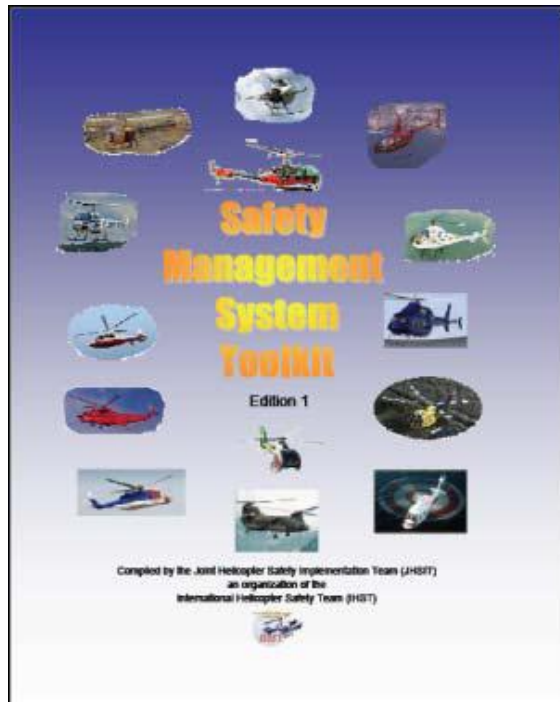


# IHST

**International Helicopter Safety Team**

Our Vision: An International Civil Helicopter Community With Zero Accidents

## Edition 1



## Edition 2



## SMS Video by HAI

### DEVELOPING A SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

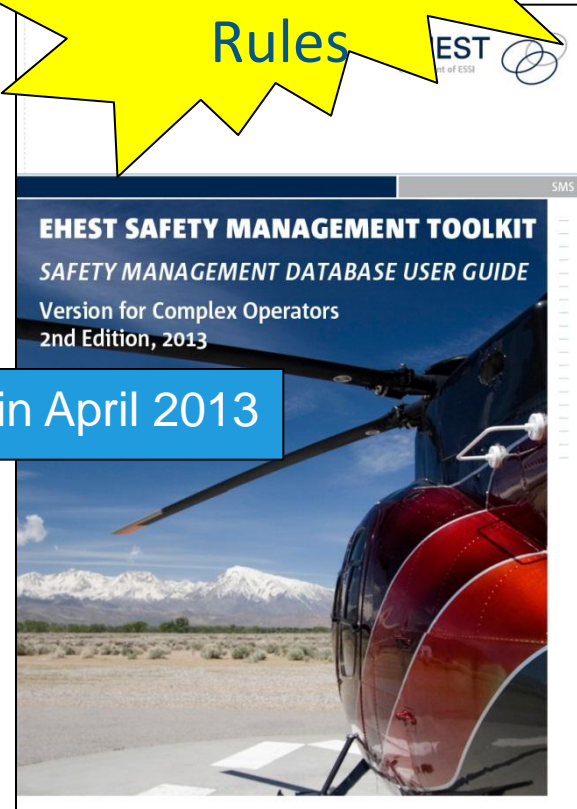
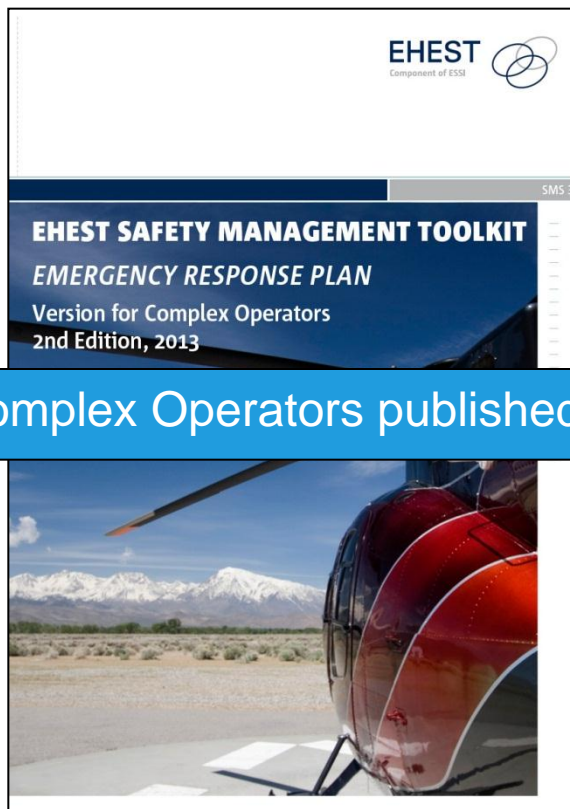


Italian  
version  
by ENAC



# EHEST SMS Toolkit Complex Operators

Based on  
European  
Rules



Edition 2 for Complex Operators published in April 2013

<http://easa.europa.eu/essi/ehest/main-page/ehest-safety-management-toolkit/>



# EHEST SMS Toolkit NCOs

Based on  
European  
Rules



<http://easa.europa.eu/essi/ehest/main-page/ehest-safety-management-toolkit/>

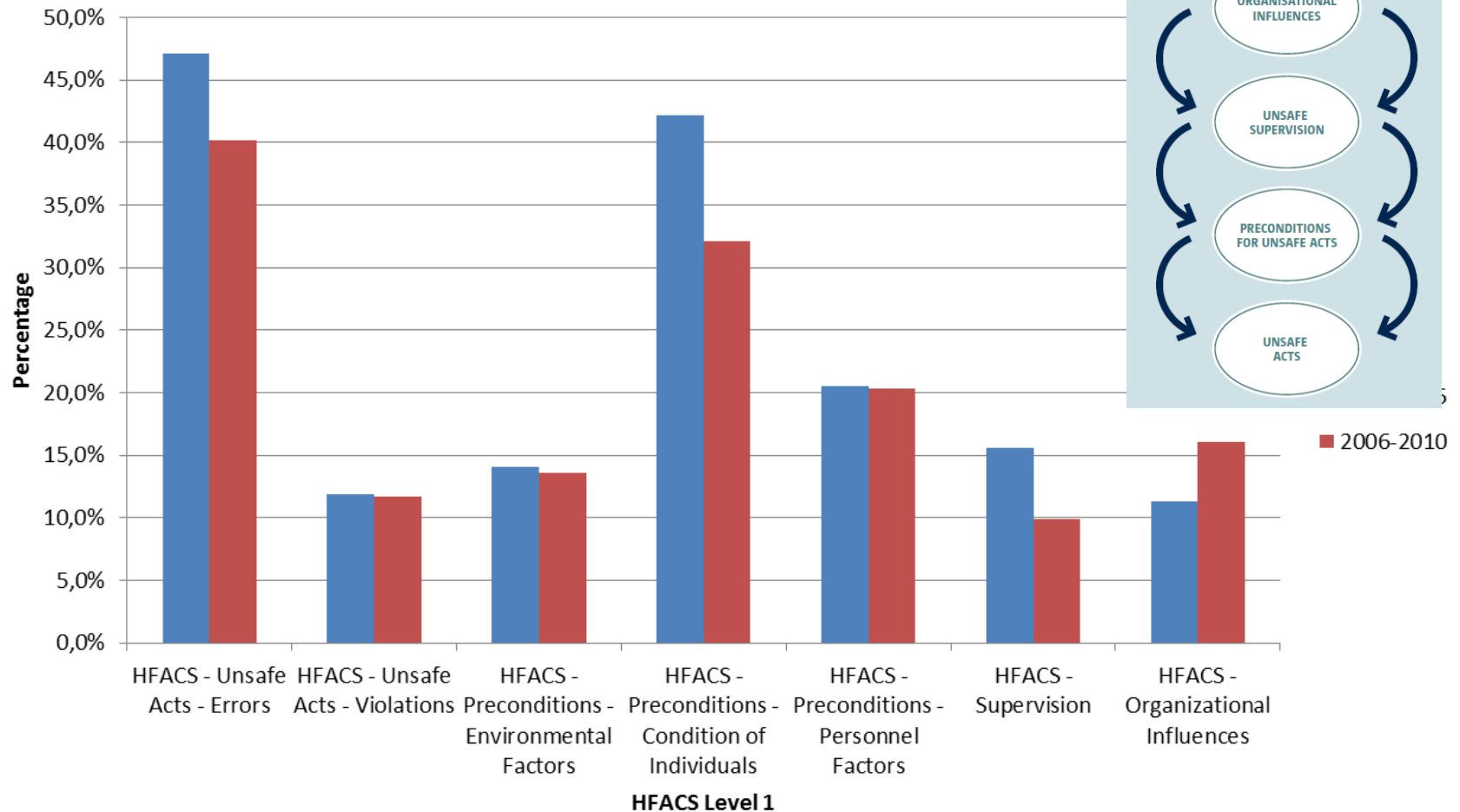
# EHEST also encourages using IS-BAO by IBAC

- Compatible for helicopter ops since 2012
- Encouraged by BHA and EHEST



# Any difference?

**Percentage of analysed accidents where HFACS Level 1 was assigned at least once**



# Communication

Stefan Becker, REGA and EHAC



# IHST

**International Helicopter Safety Team**

Our Vision: An International Civil Helicopter Community With Zero Accidents

## **Helitech, 24-26 Sep 2013, London**

- IHST and EHEST Workshops material published

## **IHSS 2014, 27-28 Feb 2014, Anaheim, CA, USA**

- To be held just ahead of Heli-Expo
- Regional team updates
- Sharing operator experiences



# We want to hear more from you!

A survey performed in 2013 by Eurocopter Training Services (ETS) indicates that approx. 80 % of the trainees, who all received the IHST and EHEST material, never read or used it...

- And you?
- What do you need from us?
- And would you consider sharing other, more adapted or “sophisticated” material through EHEST?





EUROPEAN AVIATION SAFETY AGENCY  
AGENCE EUROPÉENNE DE LA SÉCURITÉ AÉRIENNE  
EUROPÄISCHE AGENTUR FÜR FLUGSICHERHEIT



# Thank you!

Mailbox:

ehest@easa.europa.eu



# Additional Slides

*To be Used on Request*

# EHSAT – The New Accidents Report

**EHEST Report  
2006-2010**

*In preparation,  
to be published  
in 2014*

# EHSIT Specialist Team Ops & SMS



Photo Stefano Burigana



## Single RADEC Form

### Risk

### Assessment

### Description

### Evaluation and

### Control

RISK ASSESSMENT, DESCRIPTION, EVALUATION AND CONTROL (RADEC)		
RA No.:	Definition:	
Ref.:		
Operation Description:		
Hazards (What elements, in isolation or in combination, may have contributed or could contribute to an incident or accident?):		
Possible Hazard Consequences (What were or could have been the possible hazard consequences?):		
Controls in place (What are the controls and the mitigating elements already in place?):		
INITIAL Safety Risk (see Safety Risk Matrix)		
ACCEPTABLE	TOLERABLE	UNACCEPTABLE
Additional Controls (What can be done to further reduce the initial safety risks?):		Implemented?
FINAL Safety Risk (see Safety Risk Matrix)		
ACCEPTABLE	TOLERABLE	UNACCEPTABLE
Is the residual risk acceptable: YES NO (if NO go back to previous section)		
RISK ASSESSMENT CLOSED <input type="checkbox"/>		



## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

**Example:**

**SLING LOAD OPERATIONS**

# Hazards

RISK ASSESSMENT, DESCRIPTION	
RA No.:	H001
Ref.:	Sling load Standard Operating Procedure
Operation Description:	Sling load
Hazards (What elements, in isolation or combination, contribute to an incident or accident?)	
H 1.	Trees and vegetation
H 2.	Wires, power lines
H 3.	Meteorological conditions
H 4.	Wind, turbulence, down drafts
H 5.	Confined landing sites





# Hazard Consequences

## **Possible Hazard Consequences** (What were or could have been the possible hazard consequences?):

- HC 1. Main rotor strikes ground obstacles
- HC 2. Tail rotor strikes ground obstacles
- HC 3. In flight contact with wires, power lines
- HC 4. Ground personnel injuries due to lifted loads or hoists
- HC 5. Inadvertent or accidental cargo release
- HC 6. Damages on ground
- HC 7. Power loss in flight
- HC 8. Power settling
- HC 9. Uncontrolled cargo swing



# Controls

**Controls in place** (What are the controls and the mitigating elements already in place?):

- C 1. Minimum size of the landing area (25 mt. x 25 mt.)
- C 2. Pilot experience (minimum 500 FH in aerial work)
- C 3. Area must be inspected by Company personnel before landing
- C 4. High and low recognition before the first landing
- C 5. Sling load operating procedures
- C 6. Wire, power lines area mapping before sling load operations

**INITIAL Safety Risk (see Safety Risk Matrix)**

**ACCEPTABLE**

**TOLERABLE**

**UNACCEPTABLE**





# Risk Matrix

RISK LIKELIHOOD	RISK SEVERITY				
	NEGLIGIBLE (A)	MINOR (B)	MAJOR (C)	HAZARDOUS (D)	CATASTROPHIC (E)
FREQUENT (5)	5 A	5 B	5 C	5 D	5 E
OCCASIONAL (4)	4 A	4 B	4 C	4 D	4 E
REMOTE (3)	3 A	3 B	3 C	3 D	3 E
IMPROBABLE (2)	2 A	2 B	2 C	2 D	2 E
EXTREMELY IMPROBABLE (1)	1 A	1 B	1 C	1 D	1 E

# Likelihood Assessment

RISK LIKELIHOOD	MEANING	VALUE
FREQUENT	<b>Likely to occur many times.</b> Has already occurred in the Company (Freq. > 3 times per year – indicative*). Has occurred frequently in the history of the aviation industry.	5
OCCASIONAL	<b>Likely to occur sometimes.</b> Has already occurred in the Company (Freq. < 3 times per year – indicative*). Has occurred infrequently in the history of the aviation industry.	4
REMOTE	<b>Unlikely to occur, but possible.</b> <u>Has already occurred in the Company at least once or. Has seldom occurred in the history of the aviation industry.</u>	3
IMPROBABLE	<b>Very unlikely to occur.</b> Not known to have occurred in the Company but has already occurred at least once in the history of the aviation industry.	2
EXTREMELY IMPROBABLE	<b>Almost inconceivable that the event will occur.</b> It has never occurred in the history of the aviation industry.	1

# Severity Assessment

SEVERITY OF OCCURRENCE	MEANING				VALUE
	PERSONNEL	ENVIRONMENT	MATERIAL VALUES & ASSETS	REPUTATION	
<b>CATASTROPHIC</b>	Multiple fatalities	Massive effects (pollution, destruction, etc.)	Catastrophic financial loss Damage > 1 M€ (*)	International impact	<b>E</b>
<b>HAZARDOUS</b>	Fatality	Effects difficult to repair	Severe financial loss with long term effects Damage < 1 M€ (*)	National impact	<b>D</b>
<b>MAJOR</b>	<u>Serious injuries</u>	Noteworthy local effects	Substantial financial loss Damage < 250K€ (*)	Considerable impact	<b>C</b>
<b>MINOR</b>	Light injuries	Little impact	Financial loss with little impact Damage < 50K€ (*)	Limited impact	<b>B</b>
<b>NEGLIGIBLE</b>	Superficial or no injuries	Negligible or no effects	Financial loss with negligible impact Damage < 10K€ (*)	Light or no impact	<b>A</b>

# Risk Assessment - Initial Risk

RISK LIKELIHOOD	RISK SEVERITY				
	NEGLIGIBLE (A)	MINOR (B)	MAJOR (C)	HAZARDOUS (D)	CATASTROPHIC (E)
FREQUENT (5)	5 A	5 B	5 C	5 D	5 E
OCCASIONAL (4)	4 A	4 B	4 C	4 D	4 E
REMOTE (3)	3 A	3 B	3 C	3 D	3 E
IMPROBABLE (2)	2 A	2 B	2 C	2 D	2 E
EXTREMELY IMPROBABLE (1)	1 A	1 B	1 C	1 D	1 E



# Additional Controls

INITIAL Safety Risk (see Safety Risk Matrix)		
ACCEPTABLE	TOLERABLE	UNACCEPTABLE
<b>Additional Controls</b> (What can be done to further reduce the initial safety risks?):		<b>Implemented?</b>
C 7. Personnel on ground must be in radio contact with the pilot		YES
C 8. Personnel on ground must wear helmets and personal safety devices		YES
C 9. Minimum cable length = higher obstacle + 15 feet		YES
C 10. Maximum take-off weight with cargo reduced by 5%		NO
FINAL Safety Risk (see Safety Risk Matrix)		
– ACCEPTABLE	– TOLERABLE	– UNACCEPTABLE



# Risk Assessment - Final Risk

RISK LIKELIHOOD	RISK SEVERITY				
	NEGLIGIBLE (A)	MINOR (B)	MAJOR (C)	HAZARDOUS (D)	CATASTROPHIC (E)
FREQUENT (5)	5 A	5 B	5 C	5 D	5 E
OCCASIONAL (4)	4 A	4 B	4 C	4 D	4 E
REMOTE (3)	3 A	3 B	3 C	3 D	3 E
IMPROBABLE (2)	2 A	2 B	2 C	2 D	2 E
EXTREMELY IMPROBABLE (1)	1 A	1 B	1 C	1 D	1 E

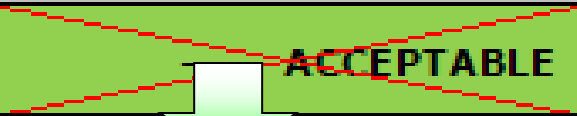


# Risk Evaluation

Additional Controls (What can be done to further reduce the initial safety risks?):	Implemented?
<b>C 7.</b> Personnel on ground must be in radio contact with the pilot	YES
<b>C 8.</b> Personnel on ground must wear helmets and personal safety devices	YES
<b>C 9.</b> Minimum cable length = higher obstacle + 15 feet	YES
<b>C 10.</b> Maximum take-off weight with cargo reduced by 5%	NO

**FINAL Safety Risk (see Safety Risk Matrix)**

 <b>ACCEPTABLE</b>	- <b>TOLERABLE</b>	- <b>UNACCEPTABLE</b>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------	-----------------------

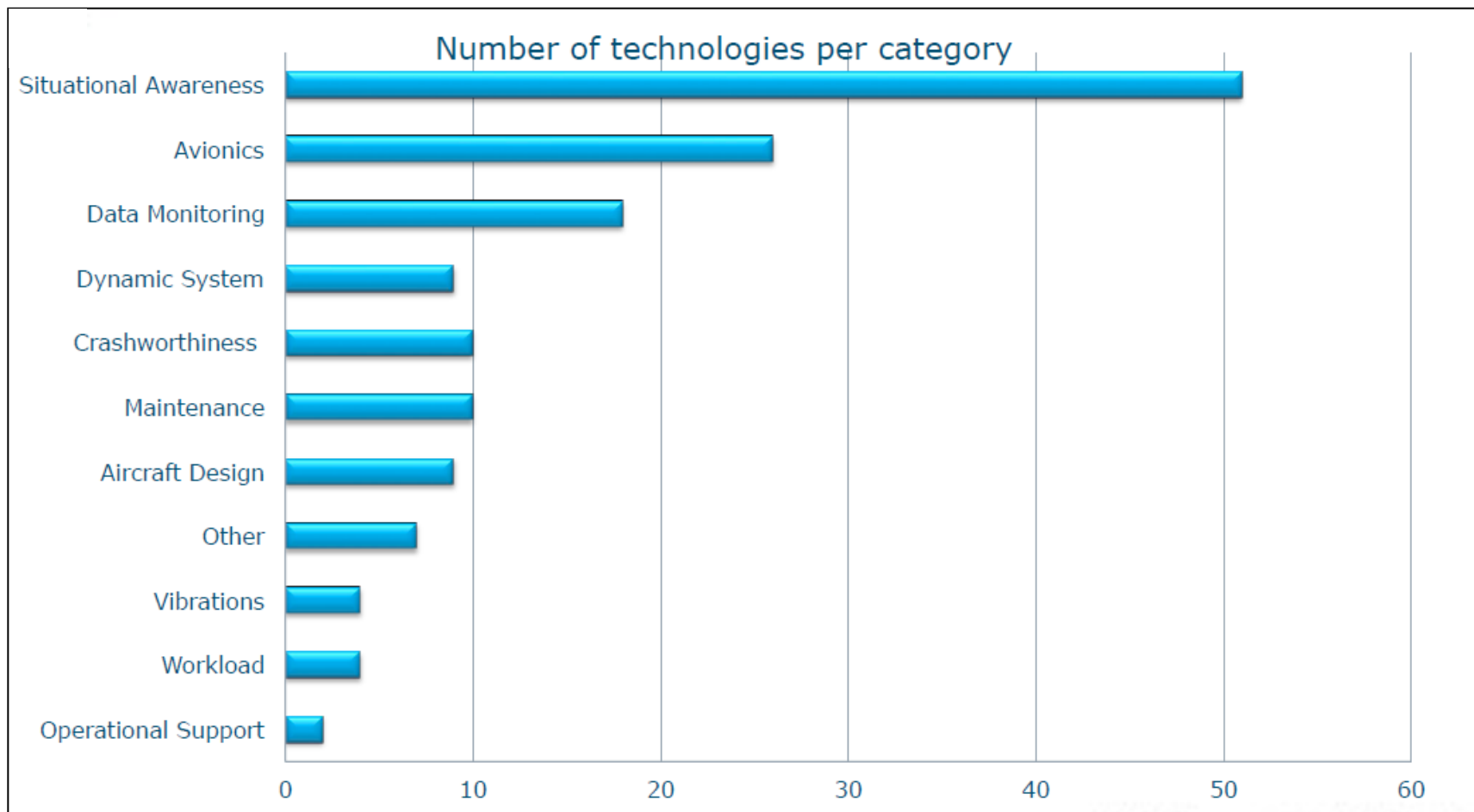
**Is the residual risk acceptable:** ~~YES~~ NO (if NO go back to previous section)

**RISK ASSESSMENT CLOSED** ~~☐~~

# EHSIT Specialist Team - Technology



# Which Technologies?



*150 technologies addressed as of Nov. 2013*



*Dedicated to innovation in aerospace*



## **EUROPEAN HELICOPTER SAFETY TEAM (EHEST): TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS ALLEVIATING HELICOPTER SAFETY CONCERNS**

*Joost Vreeken, NLR (presenter)*

*Joost.Vreeken@nlr.nl*

*Jos Stevens, NLR*

*Jos.Stevens@nlr.nl*

*Michel Masson, EASA*

*michel.masson@easa.europa.eu*

*EHSIT Specialist Team Technology*

*Avionics Europe 2013, 20-21 February 2013, Munich, Germany*



## European Helicopter Safety Team (EHEST): Technological Solutions Alleviating Helicopter Safety Concerns



Dr Matthew Greaves  
Head, Safety and Accident Investigation Centre

Helitech, 24 September 2013, London

[www.cranfield.ac.uk](http://www.cranfield.ac.uk)

# EHSIT Specialist Team Regulation



Photo AgustaWestland

# Top subjects

1. Aircraft Data Recording and Analysis
2. Inadvertent entry into IMC/DVE
3. Authority oversight
4. Safety Equipment Requirements
5. Ditching, Water Impact and Survivability
6. Helicopter Stability and Handling Qualities
7. ADELТ
8. Airworthiness Procedures and Documentation
9. Intervention Times
10. Radio Altimeter Provision
11. Wire strike protection

# Products and Plan

- May take the form of:
  - Proposals for future rulemaking tasks (using standard processes)
    - To NAA, EASA, or ICAO, depending on applicability
  - AMC/GM
  - Safety Information Bulletins
  - Recommendations for best practices (voluntary adoption)
- Using standard EASA pre-Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) process



**IHST**

**International Helicopter Safety Team**

Our Vision: An International Civil Helicopter Community With Zero Accidents

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IHST





# IHST

## International Helicopter Safety Team

Our Vision: An International Civil Helicopter Community With Zero Accidents

Government Co-Chair

FAA - Kim Smith

Industry Co-Chair

HAI – Matt Zuccaro

Secretariat

AHS – Mike Hirschberg

Director

Eurocopter - Gilles Bruniaux

Director

Sikorsky – Fred Brisbois

Director

AgustaWestland – Bob Sheffield

Director

Bristow – Bill Chiles

Director

Somen Chowdhury

Director

Helicopter Assoc. Canada – Fred Jones

Director

Robinson – Kurt Robinson

Director

Irish Aviation Authority – John Steel

Metrics Team Co-Chair

Ed DiCampli

Regional Partners - Australia, Brazil, Canada,  
Commonwealth of Independent States, Europe, India, Japan,  
Middle East/North Africa and the United States

Communications Team

FAA - Tony Molinaro

Metrics Team Co-Chair

FAA - Sean Hafner



# IHST

**International Helicopter Safety Team**

Our Vision: An International Civil Helicopter Community With Zero Accidents

## 500 Volunteers in over 40 Countries Growing each Year

- Led by teams in the US, Canada and Europe, the IHST now has teams in:
  - Australia
  - Brazil
  - the Commonwealth of Independent States
  - India
  - Japan
  - the Middle East & North Africa
- The IHST is working to establish effective teams in
  - **Asia**
  - Mexico and the Spanish-speaking countries in Central and South America
  - New Zealand
  - South Africa



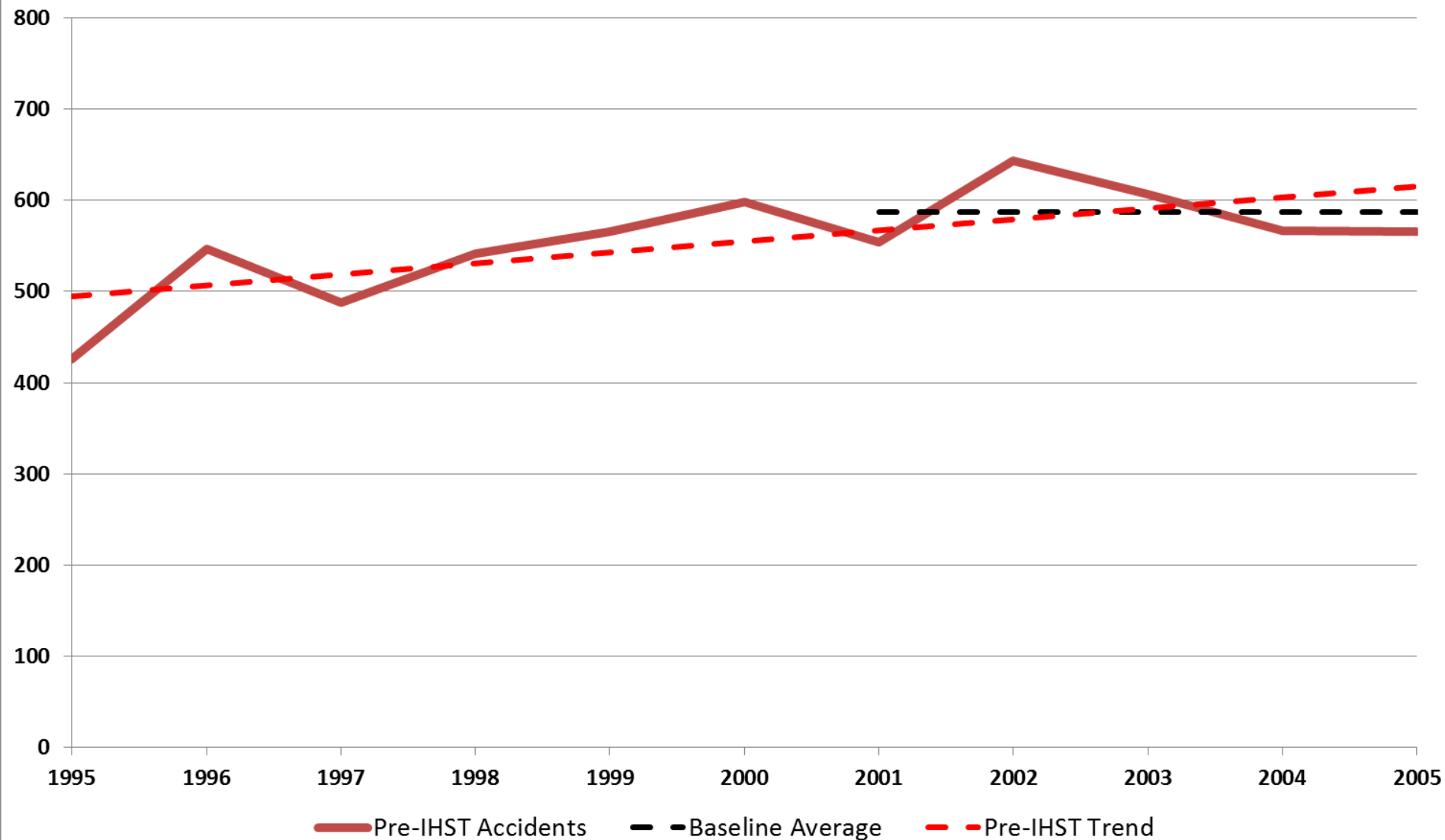


# IHST

**International Helicopter Safety Team**

Our Vision: An International Civil Helicopter Community With Zero Accidents

## Global Civil Helicopter Accidents

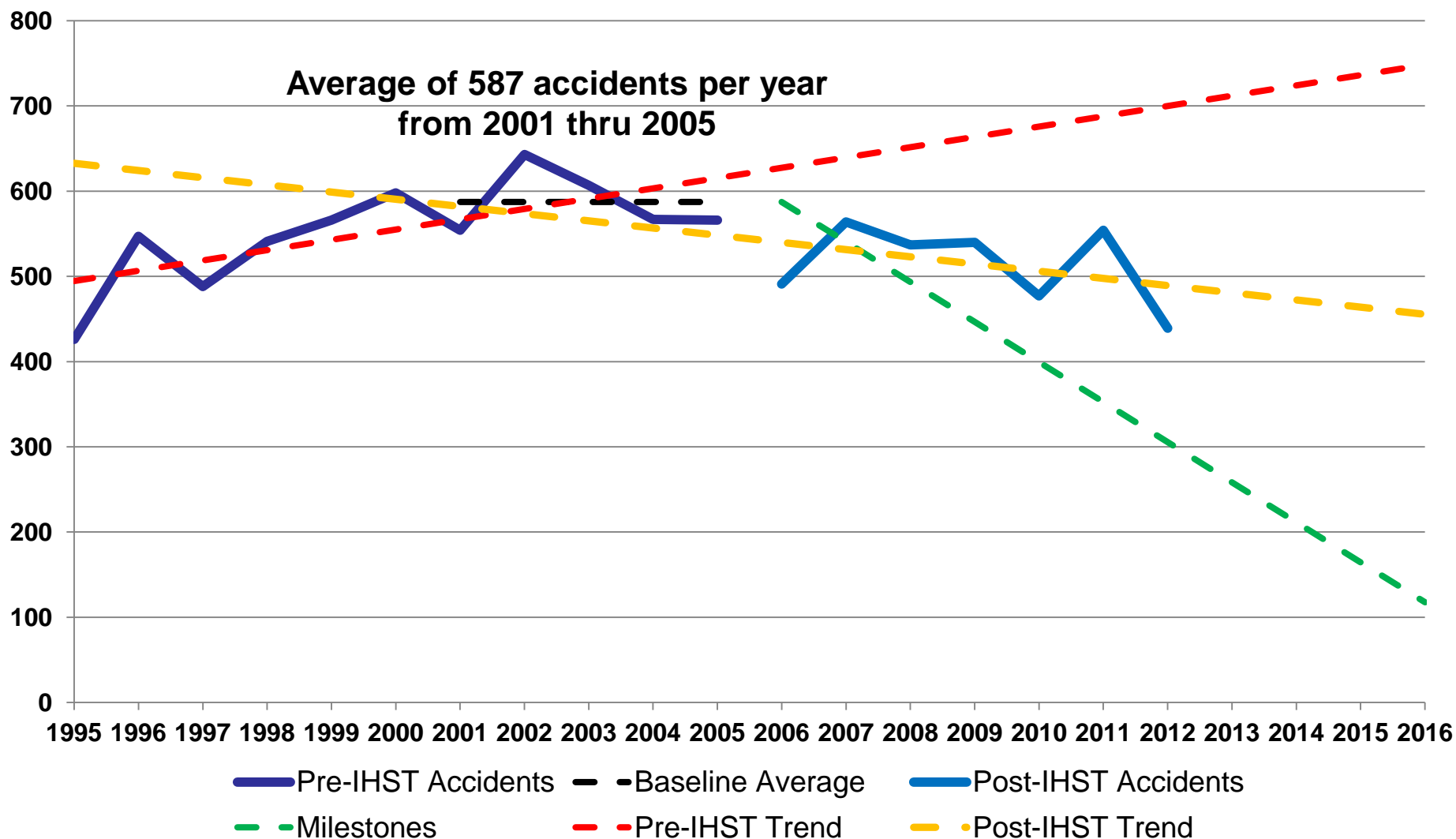




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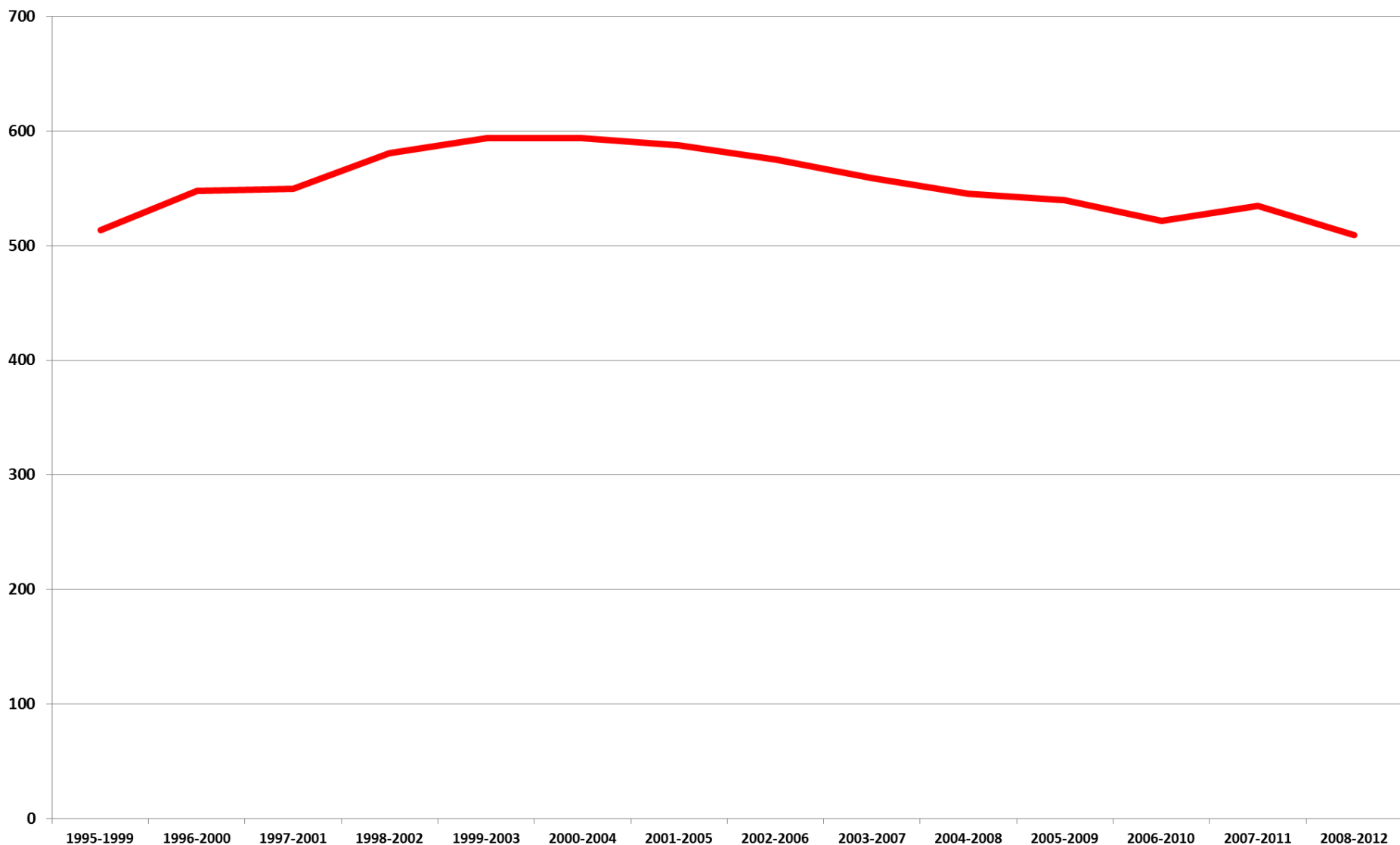


# IHST

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## 5-Year-Rolling Average Global Civil Helicopter Accidents Per Year





## CORPORATE NEWS

# Helicopter Safety Makes Few Gains

By ANDY PASZTOR  
AND DANIEL MICHAELS

The fatal crash of a **Eurocopter** oil-rig helicopter in the North Sea last month underscores stalled progress in reducing commercial helicopter accidents world-wide.

In spite of advances in cockpit technology and enhanced pilot training, helicopters' global safety record has failed to improve dramatically over the past few years—and still lags far behind standards for airliners.

That is particularly bad news for Eurocopter, a division of **Airbus** parent **European Aeronautic Defence & Space Co.**, which even before the latest accident was struggling to overcome persistent safety concerns among regulators and oil-rig workers.

"We have reputation and image damage in the U.K. that we clearly must face," Eurocopter Chief Executive Guillaume Faury said earlier this week.

Flying at night in low clouds, the Super Puma helicopter went down roughly two miles short of the Shetland Islands on Aug. 23, killing four of the 18 people aboard. Operators voluntarily grounded flights of the AS332 model over British waters, though that restriction was largely lifted six days later.

Investigators still haven't identified the cause of the accident, which both pilots survived. But on Thursday, the U.K. Air Accidents Investigation Branch issued an update disclosing that both engines were working prior to impact and



A view of a Super Puma AS332, the same model as the helicopter that crashed in the North Sea last month.

no "technical failure has been identified." The statement, which indicates the probe is focusing on weather, navigation issues, possible pilot confusion or other non-mechanical factors, was significant because the model is a workhorse for oil producers, law-enforcement agencies and even some heads of state around the globe.

In the U.S. and elsewhere, the number of civil helicopter crashes has stayed basically flat over the past decade at around 400 accidents annually world-wide. Despite extensive industry efforts to raise the safety bar, the global fatal-accident rate for all choppers

has improved only slightly since 2007; and the rate for those used in oil-and-gas operations also has remained largely unchanged through most of those years.

While the design and aerodynamic principles of any helicopter make it more prone to mechanical failures and in-flight hazards than fixed-wing aircraft, critics say the industry has fallen far short of its own safety projections.

"This is an industry that by its own admission has an unacceptably high accident rate," according to Gary Robb, a plaintiffs' attorney from Kansas City, Mo., whose firm has litigated scores

of civil accident cases. Particularly in offshore and air-ambulance operations, according to Mr. Robb, bad weather and poor visibility frequently mean "we're sending pilots out on missions that are inherently dangerous."

In 2009, after a spate of air-ambulance crashes in the U.S. sparked a public outcry, helicopter makers and operators stepped up an international safety campaign and reiterated the goal of slashing world-wide accidents rates 80% by 2016. But with the number of accidents in this country spiking in the last quarter of 2012 and the start of

2013, senior officials of that voluntary effort told industry gatherings earlier this year that the latest global and U.S. trends were still running nearly three times higher than that goal.

More worrisome to some experts is that even modest improvements in the U.S. accident rate essentially stopped around 2010. "So far this year, we're seeing an uptick in U.S. accidents," said Scott Burgess, who heads the helicopter operations program at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and serves on two major U.S. industry safety groups. "It's pretty clear," Mr. Burgess said in an interview, that many accidents "come down to pilot decision-making."

The accident rate for choppers used in U.S. oil and gas operations has hovered around eight fatal crashes per one-million flight hours. By contrast, the risk for a U.S. airline passenger averages out to roughly one fatality in 45 million flights. In nine of the last 10 years, no U.S. passenger carrier has suffered a fatal crash.

Adopting strategies from the airlines, the International Helicopter Safety Team, or IHST, a voluntary body established in 2006 to lead the safety drive, has worked to analyze dangers in rotary flight and develop measures to tackle problems. The Super Puma accident is "an additional reason ... to understand why incidents continue to happen and how to address them," said Michel Masson, secretary of the European arm of the IHST, and a safety expert at the European Aviation Safety Agency.

Matt Zuccaro, industry co-chair of the IHST, wasn't available for comment.

Eurocopter has defended the safety record of various versions of its Super Puma helicopters, three of which have gone down in the North Sea since last spring.

"The Super Puma family's overall safety record is excellent," said Mr. Faury. "One reason there are so many Super Pumas in the North Sea oil-and-gas business is their safety."

While the rate of fatal accidents in Super Pumas may be low relative to their use, the grounding and recent crash have sparked an unprecedented social-media campaign in the U.K. against the Eurocopter model.

The company's chief executive said "there is a very big gap between perceptions of operators and professionals," versus "what is said on social media." He added that "we must close the gap," so Eurocopter will "respond with facts and figures" linked to a broader review of helicopter safety in the U.K.

Executives at BP PLC said they won't resume flights of the model that crashed Aug. 23 in the North Sea until the recent accident's cause is known. France's Total SA plans to resume Super Puma flights in coming days, but to address concerns and build confidence among workers, the flights will initially carry only senior executives out to offshore platforms before passenger flights are resumed.

—Selina Williams contributed to this article.