



DGAC SAFETY INFO LEAFLET

No. 2020/03

A safety info leaflet is a document widely distributed by DGAC, without a regulatory obligation, whose purpose is to draw the attention of certain actors in the aviation sector to an identified risk or to promote best practices.
 This safety info leaflet is available on: <https://www.ecologie-solidaire.gouv.fr/info-securite-dgac>

Operators concerned	Operators of helicopters who suffered a significant drop of flight activity or a flight shutdown during the Covid-19 health crisis
Topic	Threats related to the resumption of air operations
Objectives	Drawing the attention of the operators concerned to certain risks to which they are likely to be exposed and proposing risk mitigation measures in order to follow up the resumption of activity
Context	<p>The Covid-19 pandemic led a large number of helicopters operators to partially or totally suspend their operations; some personnel have been idle for several weeks or even months. In addition, flight operations upon recovery will be different in many aspects, as a result of the operator's choice or not, as compared to previous operations. This creates unusual safety issues.</p> <p>Furthermore, as part of the notification of events to the Authority, the French Civil Aviation Authority (DSAC) was able to identify a number of risks associated with operations during the crisis that are likely to continue when activity restarts.</p> <p>The information disseminated through this Safety info leaflet deals with generic threats that may concern operators, and good practices that may be associated with them.</p> <p><i>Problems related to the management of Pilot training prior to flight scheduling is the subject of a specific communication.</i> ([FR]https://meteor.dsac.aviation-civile.gouv.fr/meteor-externe/#communications/3120).</p>
Threats and risk mitigation measures	<p>Organisation <i>Workforce management</i> The resumption of flights pre-supposes upstream reactivation of the various services; otherwise, resources must be provided to prepare the associated procedures for possible changes in activity (new destinations, new equipment, etc.).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Strategy for managing the reactivation of the various departments (Engineering, SMS, etc.) in line with the volume and nature of the operation being resumed. <p><i>Competency management</i> A significant drop or cessation of activity raises the issue of the level of personnel competency whose duties are directly related to safety (crew members, personnel in charge of crew planning, etc.), even if a training deadline is not exceeded. The requirements for training validity and recent experience laid down in the regulations are not designed for the atypical situation where an entire constituted team (flight crew, OPS service people, etc.) resumes its duties after a reduction or interruption of activity.</p>

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Refreshers should therefore be considered, and may, for example, take the form of training courses (possibly checked by a knowledge test), publications, and reminders of procedures. The duration of the interruption, the type of flights resuming and the previous experience of the staff concerned are relevant criteria for adopting the appropriate format.

- ✓ Identification of the need for refresher training for personnel whose duties are directly related to safety, before they return to work.

- ✓ In particular, for Pilots, reflection on the relevance of a theoretical refresher course and of a return simulator or helicopter session, which may include practice on normal procedures, handling ability or even practice on certain abnormal and emergency procedures. The provision of free time during this session, the use of which would be at the discretion of the pilots, is also a good practice.

For pilots, the above-mentioned communication contains additional elements dealing with the peremptory topics of the recent FCL.060 experience and the resumption of interrupted initial integration courses.

Documentary watch

In case flights were totally interrupted, operators may have had to suspend the functions of monitoring and taking into account regulatory publications (regulatory texts, AD, MMEL, AIP, etc.), safety information of all kinds, and the functions of keeping operational databases up to date.

- ✓ Ahead of the resumption of flight activity, sufficient anticipation of the "catch-up" action of the standby period.

Changes

Independent of the crisis, operators may have programmed changes in procedures, IT tools, the organisation of certain services, etc... These changes, if implemented, will therefore come in addition to the substantial adaptations that part of the staff already has to manage. The simultaneous modification of a large number of procedures presents the risk of application errors by staff.

- ✓ Reflection on the postponement of non-essential changes to the activity.

Risk Management

During the recovery period, flight operations will be significantly different from those experienced by the crews and the helicopter operator. Furthermore, the current context may lead the organisation or the crews, if no precautions are taken, to accept a higher level of operational risk than in the past for economic reasons or to maintain the operator's activity.

- ✓ Reactivation of event reporting and analysis processes as soon as operations are resumed.
- ✓ Reaffirmation of flight safety as an operator priority.
- ✓ Reminder of the importance of feedback and the principles of just culture.

Psychological impact on staff and passengers

This period of COVID-19 crisis may generate, even more than in normal times, high levels of stress for people who are essential links in the system's reliability. These high levels need to be taken into account to follow up this recovery (uncertainties about the future and the recovery, personal or professional difficulties, fatigue, etc.).

It is essential, at all organizational levels, to be aware of this in order to prevent individual problems potentially affecting the collective.

- ✓ Although the entry into force of Regulation (EU) 2018/1042 has been postponed for 6 months, operators are invited to take these future requirements into account.
- ✓ Taking into account the good practices in terms of psychological support presented in the French Civil Aviation Authority guide "Management of psychological risks and addictions", in particular §7 - Peer support programme.

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Operations

Outstations reopening

The resumption of operations on the operator's various bases, particularly on remote bases, has the particularity of being carried out without close supervision by the designated managers. Moreover, depending on the number of bases and the rate at which they reopen, the supervision of operations can generate a particularly high peak workload.

- ✓ Establishment of a base reopening protocol or checklist for the benefit of each supervisor present locally.
- ✓ If necessary, prioritisation of supervisory actions according to the risk profile associated with each base.

Flight preparation

Numerous changes to the infrastructure and services provided to air operators impact on operations: airspace closures, closures of destination or alternate aerodromes, refuelling station closures, reductions in ancillary services such as air traffic services, weather information, and rescue services.

These changes result in a higher workload for pilots to study the particularities of the flight and the number of associated NOTAMs.

Finally, in a context where all those involved in the departure of a flight (Pilots, task specialists, mechanics, etc.) may need information to manage new situations, the actions of each may be marred by unusual and multiple task interruptions, generating errors.

- ✓ Increase in the time allocated to flight preparation, in order to reduce the time pressure for the study of the flight dossier, pre-flight inspection, and preparation of the cockpit.
- ✓ Reminder of how to protect yourself from task interruptions.

Rotating rotor boarding

The health measures required for operators carrying out first flights (wearing protection (face masks, gloves, etc.), specific passenger circuit, etc.) may distract passengers during boarding.

- ✓ Implementation of a reinforced briefing for passengers (risks related to rotating rotor boarding, FOD...)
- ✓ Reinforcement of the vigilance of the ground staff in charge of boarding and training in the management of health protection.

Operating sites

During the period of inactivity, the environment at the operating sites may have changed. New obstacles (trees, cranes, works...) or a degraded surface state (vegetation, holes...) may impact the operation.

- ✓ Check as far as possible the suitability of the sites beforehand and define new trajectories and/or limitations if necessary;
- ✓ When this is not possible, set up a procedure allowing the pilot to judge, from the air, the suitability of a site (obstacles, surface condition, FOD...).

Protective mask

The wearing of protective masks on board helicopters by pilots, task specialists or passengers can affect the performance of certain normal, abnormal, and emergency procedures, such as the fluidity of communications among crew members and with ATC. The mask could also impact the pilots' visibility, especially for those wearing glasses, be uncomfortable and generate fatigue.

- ✓ Adaptation of procedures impacted by the wearing of protective masks, communication of new procedures to crew members, modification of safety instructions distributed to passengers.

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	<p><i>TEM (Threat and Error Management)</i></p> <p>It is essential that, during briefings, crews rigorously integrate threats, whether they are unusual (e.g. reduced anti-collision vigilance due to lower traffic levels, PAX anxiety or staff stress level) or usual (e.g. fatigue, engine failure, weather conditions ...) but more salient due to the context of a restart of the entire air sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Taking into account the good practices in the use of the TEM method developed in IS 2020/01
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>DGAC recommends that operators, through their safety management system :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - carry out their own safety study in order to take into account the specificities of their operation and the period of shutdown/reduction of activity ; - communicate with crews and operating personnel in the areas of identified risks and the means put in place to deal with them; - reaffirm to these personnel their essential role in the reporting of any event occurring in operations, even without having identified an impact on safety, so that organizations can regain visibility on the risks to which they are exposed and on the operations' level of safety.
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Measures taken by France in the field of aviation safety https://www.ecologique-solidaire.gouv.fr/en/measures-taken-france-concerns-aviation-safety-deal-consequences-covid-19-epidemic</p> <p>[FR] https://www.osac.aero/covid19 (see in particular the newsletter on this page)</p> <p>https://www.ecologique-solidaire.gouv.fr/en/human-factors-0</p> <p>EASA - Coronavirus-related information https://www.easa.europa.eu/the-agency/coronavirus-covid-19</p> <p>Flight Safety Foundation - Covid Safety Resources https://flightsafety.org/toolkits-resources/covid-19-safety-roadmap-and-punch-lists/</p> <p>SKYBRARY - Coronavirus Disease 2019 https://www.skybrary.aero/index.php/Coronavirus_Disease_2019_(COVID-19)</p> <p>French Civil Aviation Authority (DSAC) Guide - Managing Psychological Risks and Addictions [FR] https://www.ecologique-solidaire.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/guide_gestion_risques_psychologiques_addictions.pdf</p> <p>Safety Info Leaflet 2020/01 - Threat and Error Management (TEM) [FR] https://www.ecologique-solidaire.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/Info_securite_Threat_and_Error_Management.pdf</p>

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