

INTRODUCTION

This is the fourth in the series of Helicopter Training Communications (Heli TrainingCom). The intention of the Heli TrainingCom is to communicate directly with helicopter flight instructors in order to highlight areas and current topics in helicopter training requiring special attention.

1. STATUS OF EASA FCL

EASA Part FCL (which will replace JAR FCL 2) has now completed the NPA phase in which some 11,400 comments were received. The relevant EASA licensing groups are now reviewing these comments before being released for general comment over a relatively short period. It is anticipated that the complete Comment Response Document will be available on the EASA website by the end of this year. Following this consultation EASA will prepare their "Opinion" which will be considered by the European Commission and used in the subsequent Covering Regulations for Part FCL, Authority and Organisation Requirements. This process could take up to a year meaning that European legislation for pilot licensing may not be effective until the end of 2010 and will by necessity have a transitional period for full implementation.

2. STUDENT TRAINING RECORDS

Increasingly, whilst investigating a helicopter accident, the Air Accident Investigation Branch (AAIB) has requested the pilot's training records. Instructors are reminded that not only is it a JAR requirement for approved training records to be maintained and stored for 5 years, but also it is in the best interests of the training organisation to maintain full and accurate training records. These records must include the details of the exercises taught, the student performance and, where appropriate, be signed by the HoT, FI and Student.

3. SELF-FLY HIRE PROCEDURES

It has been discovered on a number of occasions that individuals have been permitted to self-fly hire aircraft as pilot in command without having the required current rating, licence or medical certificate. Whilst Article 26 of the ANO 2005 states that it is an individual's responsibility to ensure that his licence, medical and ratings are valid before acting as the member of a flight crew, it is imperative that training organisations that 'self-fly hire aircraft' to pilots have a robust procedure in place to prevent such incidents occurring.

4. LOSS OF TAIL ROTOR EFFECTIVENESS

In a recent helicopter accident it is believed that Loss of Tail Rotor Effectiveness (LTE) may have been a contributory factor. LTE instruction is a requirement of the PPL (H) syllabus and should be reiterated on all subsequent type rating training. Information and teaching materials are available from Eurocopter (Service Letter 1673-67-04), Helicopter Safety website (www.helisafety.org.uk) and Bell Training DVD #70 (www.bellhelicopter.com).

(Note: LTE is now to be included as a mandatory item for all instructor revalidation tests and seminars).

5. PPL (H) TRAINING AIRCRAFT EQUIPMENT FIT

Training providers are reminded that aircraft provided for PPL training must be suitably equipped to perform the air exercises required of the JAR FCL PPL (H) syllabus and skill test. There appears to be a misconception that a GPS may be substituted for a VOR or NDB in either the training of Exercise 22c (Radio Navigation) or in the testing of Item 3e of the PPL Skill Test (Tracking positioning [NDB and/or VOR] identification of facilities). This is incorrect and whilst this element of training may be conducted in a suitably equipped FNPT there is no such provision for PPL Skill Tests, which must be conducted in a VOR and/or NDB, equipped aircraft.

6. SERVO TRANSPARENCY

Another recent AAIB helicopter accident report identified Servo Transparency (also referred to as Jack Stall or Servo Reversal) as a possible contributory factor in a fatal accident. This phenomenon can be encountered during excessive manoeuvring of any single hydraulic equipped helicopter if operated beyond its approved flight envelope. However it should be possible to prevent encountering this phenomenon by avoiding combinations of high speed, high AUM, high Density Altitude and aggressive manoeuvring. Whilst normally Servo Transparency can occur smoothly, be self-correcting and in itself not necessarily be dangerous, it can cause a significant deviation from the flight path, which, if encountered in close proximity to terrain or obstacles, could be hazardous. All instructors are to ensure that that an awareness of the causes, symptoms, hazards and recovery actions relating to servo transparency are covered as part of the ground study for type rating training for all helicopters with hydraulic systems. Further information can be found in Eurocopter service Letter SL-1648-29-03.

(Note: Servo Transparency has now also been included as a mandatory item for all instructor revalidation tests and seminars).

7. GPS TRAINING

There has been an increase in the number of incidents where pilots that have inadvertently infringed airspace have subsequently blamed the GPS fitted to the aircraft and/or their lack of familiarity with it. Notwithstanding that a GPS should not be used as the primary reference for VFR navigation, this highlights a lack of training with the equipment fitted to the aircraft. Whilst it is not envisaged to include GPS training as part of the PPL syllabus (which would invariably extend the course), GPS training should be encouraged as part of the aircraft Familiarisation Training. Suitable references for GPS training can be the GPS manufacturers handbook, Safety Sense Leaflet 25 (contained in LASORS) and CAP 773.

8. INSURANCE

Subsequent to a recent LPC in which the helicopter was badly damaged and the examiner injured, it is understood that an acrimonious debate took place between the aircraft owner and the examiner as to the examiner's culpability for the damage. It is strongly recommended that instructors and examiners should always clarify their position regarding insurance before conducting training/testing. Whilst aircraft in the UK must now carry third party insurance cover, this cover may be limited to aircraft commanders who are members of a particular club, group or school. Furthermore, it is unlikely that such insurance will cover personal injury or death of the instructor/examiner. Any cover that instructors/examiners currently enjoy by virtue of being employed at a flying school may well not cover them while undertaking flying duties elsewhere. Both instructors and examiners are therefore strongly recommended to take out insurance to cover themselves against both personal liability and personal injury while training/testing.

9. SKILL TEST/PROFICIENCY CHECK DOCUMENTATION

It has been reported that candidates are presenting themselves for an LPC/LST without the correct documentation. Examiners are required to check an applicant's logbook, licence and medical certificate to ensure that any rating issued, renewed or revalidated as a result of a flight check will be valid. Whilst checks and tests for rating issue, renewal or revalidation may be carried out on individuals whose licence or medical is out of date, the examiner will explain that, irrespective of the result of the flight test, the applicant will not be able to use the rating. Individuals that wish to revalidate helicopter types by experience in accordance with JAR FCL 2 must also produce logbook evidence of the relevant experience requirements before the examiner can sign the ratings page of the licence.

For all remunerated tests and checks the aircraft must be maintained to a recognised and accepted maintenance standard. This formerly required the aircraft to hold a CAA Transport (Passenger) Category Certificate of Airworthiness. EASA Certificates of Airworthiness no longer determine the category of flight that can be conducted and so examiners must ensure that any test aircraft meets the airworthiness provisions, specifically with regard to maintenance, applicable to aerial work if remuneration is to be accepted. Group or privately owned aircraft that are maintained to private standards under an EASA Certificate of Airworthiness, may only be used for remunerated testing under very specific conditions and must meet the maintenance requirements laid down in General Exemptions ORS4-733 and ORS4-734 or their replacements before being used for a one-off test if the examiner is to be paid for his services.

10. TRAINING AIRCRAFT

Training organisations are reminded that prior to an aircraft being used for any approved training at a TRTO/FTO it must be approved by the Authority for that training. Previously an inspection would have been conducted by a Licensing Standards Inspector; however, to speed this process up, organisations can now apply to 'self inspect' by completing the form 'Approval of a Helicopter for Flight Training – Application' which is available from Approval Section at PLD. Approval will be granted following submission of an acceptable application form.

11. MISSION PLANNING

Whilst reviewing the most common accident causal factors, the Small Helicopter Safety Group (SHSG) have identified a significant number of accidents that can be attributed to pilots failing to carry out formal 'Mission Planning' before a flight. There are a number of references available that can be utilised during pilot training for this discipline including the Safety Sense Leaflets 1 Good Airmanship, 17 Helicopter Airmanship, 20 Flight Plans, 23 Pilots : Its your Decision and the Standards Document 3(H) and 19(H) which details the MATED brief used as a planning aide memoir.

12. FNPT USE IN TRAINING

JAR FCL 2.120 identifies that an FNPT 2 may be used for 5 hours of the PPL flight training (although presently the 5 hours IF dual instruction training is precluded by para 2.125 (b) – something that is under review as part of EASA Part FCL NPA process). The Small Helicopter Safety Group have recommended that RTFs should consider utilising the FNPT's ability to reduce cloud base and visibility to safely teach Ex 22b "Navigation problems at low height and reduced visibility" to the point of demonstrating inadvertent entry into IMC and dangers associated with the loss of visual references in flight.

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Distribution:
All Helicopter Instructors
The Head of Training of every Helicopter FTO

Heads of Training are recommended to keep HELI TRAININGCOMs in a suitable folder, and made available for reference, by their instructing and administration staff.