



Miscellaneous

No: 1576

UK Regulation (EU) No.923/2012

Publication date: 04 May 2023

General Exemption E 5923

---

**Standardised European Rules of the Air – Issuing VFR and SVFR Air Traffic Control Clearances to Helicopter Operations Conducted by Police, Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) and Search and Rescue (SAR) Operators**

**Background**

- 1) Emergency Services Helicopter flights may be required to operate in accordance with VFR or special VFR when the meteorological conditions specified within SERA.5005(b) and SERA.5010(c) prevent air traffic control (ATC) units from issuing the corresponding clearance. The purpose of this exemption is to permit specific aircraft operators and their pilots to operate in accordance with procedures and VFR and special VFR limits specified within their aircraft operator's operation manual, and to permit ATC units to issue VFR and special VFR clearances accordingly.

**Interpretation**

- 2) In this Exemption and Permission, references to EU regulations are to those regulations as retained and amended in UK domestic law under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 and are referenced hereafter as "UK Regulation (EU) year/number" or "UK Regulation (EU) No. number/year".
- 3) In this Exemption and Permission, 'Emergency Services Helicopter' means any helicopter operated under an Air Operator Certificate or Police Air Operator Certificate granted by the CAA; for Search and Rescue operations on behalf of the UK Maritime Coastguard Agency (MCA); for Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) under a SPA.HEMS approval; or in the service of a UK police authority.

**Exemption**

- 4) The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), pursuant to Article 4 of UK Regulation (EU) No. 923/2012 ('the Standardised European Rules of the Air' (SERA)), exempts the operator and pilot in command conducting any Emergency Services Helicopter flights, including any training flights associated with these activities, and the air traffic control (ATC) units providing a VFR clearance to such a helicopter under this exemption, from complying with SERA.5005(b) subject to the conditions specified in paragraph 5.
- 5) The conditions are that, for VFR flights conducted by Emergency Services Helicopters, including any associated training flights, taking off from or landing at an aerodrome within a control zone or entering the aerodrome traffic zone or aerodrome traffic circuit:
  - a. the flights must be conducted in accordance with procedures and limitations detailed in Operator's Operations Manuals;

- b. helicopter operators conducting SAR training flights must do so in accordance with a Letter of Agreement with the appropriate air traffic service provider; and,
  - c. ATC units must issue clearances for any such flights in accordance with procedures detailed in Civil Aviation Publication (CAP) 493, The Manual of Air Traffic Services (MATS) Part 1.
- 6) Subject to the condition specified in paragraph 7, the CAA permits, under SERA.5010, ATC units to provide a special VFR clearance to Emergency Services Helicopters, including SAR training flights in helicopters, operating under this exemption without complying with SERA.5010(c).
  - 7) The condition is that ATC units must issue any clearance for such flights in accordance with procedures detailed in CAP 493, the MATS Part 1.
  - 8) This exemption supersedes Official Record Series 4 No 1343, which is revoked.

**Date in Force**

- 9) This exemption and permission has effect from 04 May 2023 and remains in force until it is revoked.

R C Daniel

for the Civil Aviation Authority

04 May 2023

**Explanatory Notes:**

1. This general exemption does not alleviate the pilot(s) in command of their responsibility to comply with the VMC criteria prescribed in SERA.5001 when operating in accordance with VFR inside controlled airspace.
2. Helicopter pilots operating Police, HEMS or SAR flights, including any associated training flights, will do so in accordance with their Operations Manual which prescribes visibility and distance minima for their operations. Air traffic controllers are not required to know these prescribed minima.
3. Through a separate general exemption, the CAA has exempted the operator and the pilot in command of any helicopter flying for the purpose of a SAR operational or training flight from the requirements of SERA.5010(b)(2) (special VFR – flight visibility).
4. This general exemption and permission supports the following provisions within CAP 493, the MATS Part 1:
  - (i) Section 1, Chapter 2, Paragraphs 8B.1 and 8B.2,
  - (ii) Section 2, Chapter 1, Paragraphs 6A.1 and 6A.2; and
  - (iii) Section 3, Chapter 1, Paragraphs 8.5 and 8.6.