



Civil Aviation Authority
SAFETY DIRECTIVE
Number: SD-2026/001



Issued: 16 July 2026

Offshore Helicopter Occupant Survivability

This Safety Directive contains mandatory action that is required to restore an acceptable level of safety. It is issued in accordance with Article 248 of the Air Navigation Order 2016 and Article 70 of UK Regulation (EU) 1139/2018.

Recipients must ensure that this Directive is copied to all members of their staff who need to take appropriate action or who may have an interest in the information (including any 'in-house' or contracted maintenance organisation and relevant outside contractors).

Applicability:	
Aerodromes:	Not primarily affected
Air Traffic:	Not primarily affected
Airspace:	Not primarily affected
Airworthiness:	Not primarily affected
Flight Operations:	All AOC helicopter operators conducting offshore operations
Licensed Personnel:	Not primarily affected

In this Safety Directive, pursuant to the Revocation and Reform Act 2023 ("REUL Act"), previous references to retained EU law are replaced by the term "assimilated law" and are written as "UK Regulation (EU) No. number/year".

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Safety Directive (SD) promulgates the Operational Directive (OD) (see **Annex 1**) issued by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on 16 July 2026. It is applicable to operators conducting offshore Commercial Air Transport (CAT) helicopter operations in accordance with requirements under UK Regulation (EU) No. 965/2012 to support offshore oil, gas and mineral exploration, production, storage and transport, and the offshore renewable energy industry.
- 1.2 The CAA participated in a major review of helicopter ditching and water impact occupant survivability, performed by EASA Rule Making Task RMT.0120 (see [NPA 2016-01 - Helicopter ditching and water impact occupant survivability | EASA](#)). This exercise resulted in a significant upgrade of the associated Certification Specifications (CS) contained in CS 27 and 29 at Amendment 5. The upgraded CS applies only to new helicopter certifications, however RMT.0120 agreed that some of the CS 27/29 changes should be applied to the existing offshore helicopter fleet via Part/CS 26. The changes identified for retro-application were mandated by EASA via Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No. 2022/1254 and ED Decision 2022/019/R in 2022. The CAA established Rule Making Task ('RMT') 0166 in 2023 with the intention of replicating the EASA mandate. Progression of the CAA RMT was paused however, partly due to unavailability of the aircraft modifications that would be required to support the mandate and partly to await the results of the research the CAA was performing for EASA at

that time on helicopter underwater escape (see [Helicopter Underwater Escape #2 | EASA](#)) which might affect the content of any mandate¹. These factors had largely been addressed by late 2025.

- 1.3 The time required for full implementation of RMT 0166 raises a safety concern for the CAA in the shorter term, especially in view of the motivation for the initiative (e.g. Recommendation 05 of the UK CAA Offshore Review (CAP 1145), UK AAIB Safety Recommendations 93-26, 2011-065 and 2016-017, -018, -020, -022, -025 and -026, issues arising from the accident to Sikorsky S-92A LN-OIJ on 28 February 2024). Although the time for implementation is mitigated to some extent by the fact that some of the measures have already been voluntarily implemented in the UK helicopter fleet, the CAA identified the following three elements that were considered to warrant action in the shorter term:

- (a) Underwater emergency exit operating forces.
- (b) Deployment of life rafts by survivors floating in the sea.
- (c) Operability of the emergency floatation system following a survivable water impact.

The purpose of this Safety Directive is to expedite the implementation of the above three elements of RMT 0166 which the CAA considers to be a proportionate measure to enhance safety.

2 Compliance/Action to be Taken

- 2.1 Operators of small category A helicopters and large helicopters that are required, in accordance with point CAT.IDE.H.320(a) of Annex IV to UK Regulation (EU) No. 965/2012, to be designed for landing on water or certified for ditching must ensure that, in addition to existing applicable requirements, operation of all underwater emergency exits must not require any exceptional effort.
- 2.2 Operators of large helicopters that are required by point SPA.HOFO.165(d) of Annex V to UK Regulation (EU) No. 965/2012 to have one or more life rafts installed, must ensure that, in addition to existing applicable requirements, the life raft(s) is (are) remotely deployable, with a means to deploy the life raft(s) located within easy reach of any survivors in the water, with the helicopter in an upright floating or capsized position.
- 2.3 Operators of small category A helicopters and large helicopters that are required, in accordance with point CAT.IDE.H.320(a) of Annex IV to UK Regulation (EU) No. 965/2012, to be designed for landing on water or certified for ditching, must ensure that the emergency floatation system is capable of operating when the helicopter's engine driven generators are off-line.

3 Further Information

- 3.1 Compliance with paragraph 2.1 above and paragraph 3(a) of the attached Operational Directive can be achieved by compliance with CS 27.807(b)(2) / CS 29.809(c) Amendment 5 or later, noting that an appropriate maximum opening effort (50 pounds) is specified by FAA AC29.809 as referenced in AMC 27.807(d) para.(b)(8)(iii) and AMC 29.809(b)(3)(iii). Note, however, that lower maximum opening efforts of 40 pounds and 35 pounds are to be applied in the case of paragraphs 3(b) and 3(c) of the attached Operational Directive respectively.
- 3.2 Compliance with paragraph 2.2 above and paragraph 4 of the attached Operational Directive can be achieved by compliance with CS 29.1415(b)(1) Amendment 5 or later.
- 3.3 Compliance with paragraph 2.3 above and paragraph 5 of the attached Operational Directive can be achieved by compliance with CS 27.801(c)(1) / CS 29.801(c)(1) Amendment 5 or later and, specifically, AMC 29.801(c)(2)(ix).

¹ Inter-alia, the research confirmed the FAA AC 29-2C point 29.809 para. b. (1) maximum exit operating load for 'push-out' windows utilising a hand/elbow strike operating technique, but indicated that lower loads would be appropriate for 'push-out' windows utilising a hand push technique and for lever-operated exits.

4 Queries

- 4.1 Any queries or requests for further guidance as a result of this communication should be addressed to FOPConsultation@caa.co.uk.

5 Cancellation

- 5.1 This Directive will remain in force until further notice.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Glenn Bradley', is positioned above the printed name.

Signed: Glenn Bradley

Date: 16 July 2026

Operational Directive

1. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), in exercise of its powers under article 248 of the Air Navigation Order 2016 ('the Order'), directs the operator ('a specified operator') of any helicopter which is:
 - (a) registered in the United Kingdom and operated by a specified operator for whom the CAA is the competent authority; or
 - (b) flying in the United Kingdom or in the neighbourhood of an offshore installation;to comply with the requirements set out in paragraphs 3, 4 and 5.
2. This Directive is made in the interests of safe operation by addressing the risks associated with three high priority elements of CAA Rule Making Task 0166. Action on these three elements is supported by: Recommendation 05 of the UK CAA Offshore Review (CAP 1145); Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) Safety Recommendations 2016-017 and -026 issued following the accident to AS332 L2 Super Puma helicopter, G-WNSB on approach to Sumburgh Airport on 23 August 2013; issues arising from the accident to Sikorsky S-92A LN-OIJ in the sea west of Sotra, Vestland County, Norway on 28 February 2024.

Requirements

3. From 01 July 2028, a specified operator must not conduct commercial air transport offshore operations to an offshore location using a helicopter with underwater emergency exits that cannot be opened without use of exceptional effort. Specifically:
 - (a) For push-out window emergency underwater exits where a hand or elbow strike operating technique is intended to be used, the average load required to operate the exit release mechanism and open the exit (measured using a steady load application) must be in accordance with FAA AC 29-2C point 29.809 para. b. (1), i.e. the average load required to operate the exit release mechanism and open the exit must not exceed 50 pounds, and the maximum individual load of a test series must not exceed 55 pounds.
 - (b) For push-out window emergency underwater exits where a hand push operating technique is intended to be used, the average load required to operate the exit release mechanism and open the exit (measured using a steady load application) must not exceed 40 pounds² and the maximum individual load must not exceed 44 pounds³.
 - (c) For lever-operated emergency underwater exits, the average steady load must not exceed 35 pounds⁴ and the maximum individual load must not exceed 38.5 pounds⁵.
4. From 01 July 2028, a specified operator must not conduct commercial air transport offshore operations to an offshore location using a helicopter not equipped with a life raft(s) that is (are) remotely deployable by survivors in the water, with the helicopter in an upright floating or capsized position.
5. From 01 July 2028, a specified operator must not conduct commercial air transport offshore operations to an offshore location using a helicopter for which the emergency floatation system requires the helicopter's engine driven generators to be on-line in order to operate.

² The maximum operating load for push-out window exits utilising the hand push technique of 40 pounds is taken from the EASA research ([Helicopter Underwater Escape #2 | EASA](#)).

³ The maximum individual load of 44 pounds is set at 10% higher than the average load for consistency with FAA AC 29-2C point 29.809 para. b. (1).

⁴ The maximum operating load for lever-operated exits of 35 pounds is taken from the EASA research.

⁵ The maximum individual load of 38.5 pounds is set at 10% higher than the average load for consistency with FAA AC 29-2C point 29.809 para. b. (1).

Commencement

6. This Directive comes into force on 16 July 2026 and will remain in force until revoked by the CAA.