



Operational Safety Notice OSN2019-002

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ALSE – Flight Helmets

Aviation life support equipment (ALSE), including flight helmets, fire-resistant clothing, fire-resistant flight gloves, and leather or fire-resistant boots, provide crew members and passengers protection against hazards in the aviation environment. The flight helmet alone provides head, hearing, and eye protection in most environments.

During a recent accident where an MDHI 369E helicopter impacted terrain during takeoff, the pilot sustained serious injuries to his head and body. Fairly clear evidence indicates the pilot struck the left side of his face and the right side of his head during the impact sequence. Based on the medical evidence, a flight helmet would have likely decreased the severity of his injuries.

In 2015, the FAA assigned the Aviation Rulemaking Advisory Committee (ARAC) a new task to provide recommendations regarding occupant protection rulemaking in rotorcraft. The ARAC accepted the task and established the Rotorcraft Occupant Protection Working Group (ROPWG) to provide advice and recommendations to the ARAC on the assigned task.

According to the ROPWG Task 6 Report to the ARAC, blunt impact injury to the head has been identified as one of the most common and severe types of injuries sustained by occupants in survivable helicopter crashes. The use of flight helmets by crew and passengers has proven to be effective in preventing injuries and saving lives; however, flight helmets are not widely used during helicopter flight operations.

In the ROPWG Task 6 Report, the ROPWG recommended that operators be informed of the benefits of using flight helmets and visors. The objective is to encourage flight helmet use by the industry for all crew and passengers involved in higher risk mission profiles. A portion of the helicopter industry already uses flight helmets for crew and passengers including the armed forces, air medical, law enforcement, and other commercial helicopter operators.

MDHI strongly encourages the use of approved helicopter flight helmets and flying with visors down, especially during higher risk operations. See also OSN2015-001 Helmet Communication Cord Connection.

Fly safe!

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