

### **Why a Helideck Should be Certified**

Helicopter operators are responsible by law to ensure that every site they intend to land or take off from, is suitable for purpose. An acceptable means of meeting this responsibility is through the certification of the helideck, thus demonstrating compliance with the ruling regulations such as UK CAA CAP 437, and NCAA BSL D 5-1. The helicopter operators achieve this compliance through a Memorandum of Understanding with Helideck Certification Agency (HCA) explained in UK CAA CAP 437 Appendix F.

An HCA audit is based on findings on a specific date only and thus does not guarantee the ongoing compliance of the helideck, or that the processes associated with safe helicopter operations are always adhered to. That remains the responsibility of the duty holder / asset operator.

### **Audit Scope**

There are three elements to a helideck inspection which must be found satisfactory to obtain a certificate. These are:

- ✔ The physical structure and obstacle environment
- ✔ Support equipment including firefighting facilities, radios, weather reporting.
- ✔ Personnel employed in helideck operations (their training & competence) and operating procedures used.

Duty Holders should be aware of CAP 437 requirement for periodic helideck friction testing of decks with a micro-texture finish (eg non-slip paint or grit-blasted finish). This is required even if a helideck net is fitted. Please advise whether you need a friction test conducted at the same time as the inspection.

The installation/ship should have the following information available:

- ✔ A copy of the latest foam test certificate for "produced" foam (i.e. what comes out of the monitors). This should have been done within the preceding 12 months.
- ✔ Evidence of training qualifications, including Dangerous Goods Awareness for the helideck crew (e.g. copies of certificates or a training matrix showing course dates).
- ✔ Evidence of how the helideck crew is assessed as being competent (e.g. onsite training exercises) including compliance with CAP437 Appendix K for heli-admin.
- ✔ For Radio Operators and HLOs, evidence of either UK CAA ROCC (or VHF Restricted Operators License) or an aeronautical radio operators certificate issued by the country of registry of the onboard radio equipment.
- ✔ Evidence of how the meteorological reporting systems have been checked and calibrated.
- ✔ Evidence of a system to verify the integrity of the perimeter net (drop testing is no longer an acceptable method).
- ✔ Evidence of the latest friction test result for the helideck along with the calibration certificate of the friction tester and the competence certificate of the person conducting the test.
- ✔ Evidence that the deck stress value ('t' marking) is still correct for this helideck. This is normally checked by the Class Society surveyor during their periodic inspections, or the Duty Holder appointed Technical Authority.
- ✔ Evidence of how the baggage scales are checked and calibrated (this can be done internally by a competent person or an approved external company).

### **Certification – Helicopter Landing Area Certificate (HLAC)**

Following the physical audit, a Helideck Inspection Report will be issued detailing any non-conformances against the guidelines. Non-conformances will be classified as follows:

**Critical Finding:** Any existing Helideck Landing Area Certificate (HLAC) will be suspended. Helicopter operations will only be allowed to continue if the helicopter operator has completed an appropriate risk assessment.

**Major Finding:** Actions raised to support the rectification of major findings have a maximum period of 90 days to be closed out. Routine helicopter operations will be allowed to continue but restrictions may be imposed.

**Minor Finding:** Actions raised to support the rectification of minor findings must be resolved prior to a full certificate being issued. Routine helicopter operations will be allowed to continue.

**Advisory:** No immediate action is required. Advisories may be raised to state that current limitations/non-compliances noted on the Helicopter Information Plate (HIP) will remain; or to highlight areas that while are not an immediate area of concern, could intime, develop into a non-conformance.

All actions should be addressed through HCAs digital Helideck Inspection Certification System (HiX). Full instructions for accessing HiX will be provided prior to our visit.

On successful close out of all actions, an HLAC is issued confirming that the helideck has achieved a minimum safe standard and detailing any operating limitations that may apply.

### **Validity**

Inspections have always been conducted on a biennial basis. In the past, there has been a requirement for the Duty Holder to complete and submit 6-monthly Helideck Fitness Checks in the interim period between the 2-yearly inspections. However, evidence has shown very poor compliance with this and has led to the insistence by the helicopter operators and the UK CAA for greater oversight.

As from October 2024, an HLAC will be issued with a 12-month validity only. A new on-line Helideck Self-Assessment must then be completed by the Duty Holder prior to the certificate expiry date using our HiX system. This will be assessed by HCA and on successful completion, the HLAC will be extended and revalidated for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year.