

Follow-up Action on Occurrence Report

ACCIDENT TO EUROCOPTER AS 350B, G-JESI, AT DUNKERRIN, CO. OFFALY, IRELAND ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2006

CAA FACTOR NUMBER : F2/2008
FACTOR PUBLICATION DATE : 11 February 2008
OPERATOR : Cabair Helicopters
CAA OCCURRENCE NUMBER : 2006/08688
AAIB REPORT : AAIU 2007-027

SYNOPSIS

From AAIB Report:

During "hot refuelling" the pilot observed a slight rise in his fuel gauge to 20% fuel before it stopped increasing. In the belief that his gauge was faulty, the pilot requested, over his radio, that the refueller operator continue refuelling up to 300 litres. The pilot then signed the presented fuel docket for 302 litres and re-positioned his helicopter to the parking area. Later that day, G-JESI took off from the K Club at 18.35 hrs (L) with 4 passengers onboard for the intended return flight to Adare, Co Limerick. At approximately 19.10 Hrs (L), the pilot became concerned about his fuel state and, following a slight engine surge, made a precautionary landing in a farm near the village of Dunkerrin, on the Offaly/Tipperary border.

Both pilot and passengers exited the aircraft safely. An examination of the helicopter the following morning by an Inspector of Air Accidents determined that the fuel tank contained a total of 6.5 litres of fuel. Furthermore there was no evidence of the helicopter having suffered a leak and no fuel staining was evident on the ground. There was no damage.

It was later determined by the investigation that the helicopter fuel gauge was fully serviceable and that no leak had occurred through the entire fuel system. The investigation notes that only 2% of the fuel requested by the pilot (approximately 10 litres of 302 litres) was apparently uploaded during the hot refuelling at the K Club but the investigation was unable to reconcile this serious anomaly.

FOLLOW UP ACTION

The seven Safety Recommendations made by the AAIB following their investigation are reproduced below together with the CAA's responses.

Recommendation SR 10 of 2006

The IAA should ensure that the hot refuelling of helicopters should only be provided where the provision of this service is explicitly covered in the refuelling provider's exposition.

CAA Response

This Recommendation is not addressed to the CAA.

CAA Status - Closed

Recommendation SR 11 of 2006

The IAA should ensure that the hot refuelling of helicopters, and associated safety procedures, should be explicitly covered in the Operations Manual of all refuelling providers who supply such a service.

CAA Response

This Recommendation is not addressed to the CAA.

CAA Status - Closed

Recommendation SR 12 of 2006

The IAA should ensure that the procedures covering hot refuelling of helicopters engaged in Public Transport and Aerial Work operations should be clearly laid down in the helicopter operator's Operations Manual.

CAA Response

This Recommendation is not addressed to the CAA.

CAA Status - Closed

Recommendation SR 13 of 2006

The IAA in conjunction with the UK CAA should ensure that all Helicopter Operator's Operation's Manuals require the pilot to reconcile the initial fuel contents, and the added fuel, as per the refuelling docket, with the contents indicated by the helicopter's fuel gauge at the end of refuelling. This is particularly required where hot refuelling is permitted. If such reconciliation is not achieved, the helicopter should be shut down until the fuel contents are independently verified.

CAA Response

The CAA accepts this Recommendation and the CAA will by means of a Flight Operations Department Communication to Operators (FODCOM) to all UK helicopter AOC holders, require them to carry out a Special Operations Manual Check (SOMC) to confirm that the documented procedures, for the reconciliation of arrival fuel, fuel uplift and departure fuel to meet the requirements of JAR-OPS 3.350, are robust. The FODCOM will be published by the end of January 2008 with a requirement that the SOMC be completed, at the latest, by the end of April 2008. Once the results of the SOMC are available they will be shared with the Helicopter Inspectorate of the Irish Aviation Authority.

CAA Status - Open

Recommendation SR 14 of 2006

The IAA should ensure that providers of fuel to Public Transport and Aerial Work helicopters, who are authorised to provide hot refuelling, should be required to present the pilot with meter-generated (printed) fuel dockets when a helicopter is hot refuelled. On this docket, the initial and final fuel meter readings, and then quantity of fuel dispersed, should be clearly printed. Exemption from such a requirement may be issued to individual operators to cover specific situations such as helicopter SAR operations.

CAA Response

This Recommendation is not addressed to the CAA.

CAA Status - Closed

Recommendation SR 15 of 2007

The IAA should review the possible danger associated with the practice of using standard nozzles for hot refuelling of helicopters, with a view to considering a requirement for the introduction of vapour sealing nozzles for this operation.

CAA Response

This Recommendation is not addressed to the CAA.

CAA Status - Closed

Recommendation SR 9 of 2006

The IAA should consider rewording AICs Nr 12/00 and Nr 38/98 to ensure that they explicitly cover mobile refuelling installations.

CAA Response

This Recommendation is not addressed to the CAA.

CAA Status - Closed