

Follow-up Action on Occurrence Report

ACCIDENT TO AEROSPATIALE SA365N, DAUPHIN 2, G-BLUN, AT MORECAMBE BAY GAS PLATFORM ON 27 DECEMBER 2006
(Lost control on approach to gas platform and crashed into sea)

CAA FACTOR NUMBER : F12-2008
FACTOR PUBLICATION DATE : 17 October 2008
OPERATOR : CHC Scotia Limited
CAA OCCURRENCE NUMBER : 2006/11599
AAIB REPORT : AAR 7/2008

SYNOPSIS

From AAIB Report:

The helicopter departed Blackpool at 1800hrs on a scheduled flight consisting of eight sectors within the Morecambe Bay gas field. The first two sectors were completed without incident but, when preparing to land on the North Morecambe platform, in the dark, the helicopter flew past the platform and struck the surface of the sea. The fuselage disintegrated on impact and the majority of the structure sank. Two fast response craft from a multipurpose standby vessel, which was on position close to the platform, arrived at the scene of the accident 16 minutes later. There were no survivors amongst the five passengers and two crew.

The investigation identified the following contributory factors:

1. The co-pilot was flying an approach to the North Morecambe platform at night, in poor weather conditions, when he lost control of the helicopter and requested assistance from the commander. The transfer of control was not precise and the commander did not take control until approximately four seconds after the initial request for help. The commander's initial actions to recover the helicopter were correct but the helicopter subsequently descended into the sea.
2. The approach profile flown by the co-pilot suggests a problem in assessing the correct approach descent angle, probably, as identified in trials by the CAA, because of the limited visual cues available to him.
3. An appropriate synthetic training device for the SA365N was available but it was not used; the extensive benefits of conducting training and checking in such an environment were therefore missed.

Six Safety Recommendations have been made.

FOLLOW UP ACTION

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

Recommendation 2008-032

It is recommended that CHC (Scotia) review their Standard Operating Procedures related to helideck approaches, to ensure that the non-handling pilot actively monitors the approach and announces range to touchdown and height information to assist the flying pilot with his execution of the approach profile. This is especially important on the SA365N helicopter when the co-pilot is flying approaches in poor visual conditions and cannot easily monitor a poorly positioned radio altimeter.

CAA Response

This Recommendation is not addressed to the CAA.

CAA Status - Closed

Recommendation 2008-033

It is recommended that the European Aviation Safety Agency ensure that research into instrument landing systems that would assist helicopter crews to monitor their approaches to oil and gas platforms in poor visual flying conditions and at night is completed without delay.

CAA Response

This Recommendation is not addressed to the CAA.

CAA Status - Closed

Recommendation 2008-034

It is recommended that CHC (Scotia) conduct a thorough review of their Standard Operating Procedures related to helideck approaches, for all helicopter types operated by the company, with the aim of ensuring safe operations.

CAA Response

This Recommendation is not addressed to the CAA.

CAA Status - Closed

Recommendation 2008-035

It is recommended that the Civil Aviation Authority should ensure that the recurrent training and checking of JAR-OPS, Part 3 approved operators should be carried out in an approved Synthetic Training Device.

CAA Response

The CAA accepts this recommendation. The CAA will write to all commercial helicopter operators and ask them to review their current recurrent training and checking arrangements with their assigned Inspectors to ensure that whenever possible Synthetic Training Devices are being used in accordance with the JAR-OPS 3 requirements. This action will be completed by February 2009.

CAA Status - Open

Recommendation 2008-036

It is recommended that the European Aviation Safety Agency investigate methods to increase the conspicuity of immersion suits worn by the flight crew, in order to improve the location of incapacitated survivors of a helicopter ditching.

CAA Response

This Recommendation is not addressed to the CAA.

Recommendation 2008-037

It is recommended that the Civil Aviation Authority ensure that personnel who are required to conduct weather observations from offshore installations are suitably trained, qualified and provided with equipment that can accurately measure the cloud base and visibility.

CAA Response

The CAA accepts this recommendation insofar as amending current CAA guidance material in CAP 437 "Offshore Helicopter Landing Areas - Guidance on Standards" is concerned. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the CAA and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on Offshore Operations identifies that the CAA's remit is to regulate the safety of helicopters that operate to and from offshore installations. In accordance with this MoU, the CAA provides guidance to assist helicopter operators and the Helicopter Certification Agency (HCA) to discharge their relevant duties. The HSE has agreed that conformity with the guidance in CAP 437 is an acceptable means of compliance with applicable offshore regulations. When Edition 6 of CAP 437 is published (currently scheduled for before the end of December 2008), it will contain comprehensive and revised guidance material concerning the requirements for accurate, timely and complete meteorological observations which are strongly recommended to be gathered using automated meteorological equipment. This guidance also includes material concerning meteorological observer training and radio messaging in relation to meteorological reports. Additionally, the CAA is working with the HCA and Oil and Gas UK to agree appropriate implementation methodologies, including using relevant information extracted from CAP 746 "Meteorological Observations at Aerodromes" on specifications for meteorological sensor equipment to measure cloud base and visibility at offshore installations.

CAA Status - Open