

HELICOPTER SAFETY NEWS

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PART TWO

Four Helicopter Accidents and Seven Fatalities in Just Eight Days:

Helicopter Pilots Need to Take Ownership of These Tragic Numbers Says the IHST.

From Oct. 10th to Oct 17th, the U.S. helicopter community experienced four accidents that started out as “routine” general aviation/private flights, but each ended with fatal results.

- On Oct. 10th, a helicopter carrying three businessmen returning from a golf outing crashed into a wooded area in northeastern Pennsylvania as it struggled to land in bad weather. Two people were killed.
- On the same day, Oct. 10th, a low-flying helicopter struck a guy-wire supporting a radio tower near Crowley, Louisiana, killing the pilot.
- On Oct. 12th, a helicopter crashed during an evening flight in a wooded area near Fredericksburg, Texas, killing all three onboard, killing all three on board.
- On Oct. 17th, a helicopter went down and caught fire in woods in Bucks County, Penn., after taking off in early morning fog, killing the pilot.

The bigger picture beyond these eight days is not much brighter. During FY 2011, there were 131 rotorcraft accidents in the United States and 16 of them resulted in fatalities. A year later, during FY 2012, we still saw 135 accidents and 19 were fatal ones. This happened despite a renewed effort throughout the industry to utilize more safety tools and methods. And now, at the beginning of FY 2013, we already have experienced four fatal accidents.

There are lives at stake and too many at the controls are not paying attention.

The International Helicopter Safety Team (IHST) and its industry partners have created numerous safety toolkits, manuals, lists, and recommendations aimed at reinvigorating a safety culture, particularly among private pilots. The helicopter trade media has been especially supportive in getting the word out

regarding all the assistance that is now available. But looking at the statistics, looking at the seven lives recently lost, a culture of safety is not developing as quickly as it needs to. The message is not getting all the way through.

The IHST will be talking to every one of its key partners to determine how to redouble its efforts. How can we speak directly to the private helicopter pilot? How can we instill the belief that safety needs to be considered before every decision and during every action in the cockpit? We, as an industry, need to help private pilots assess where their safety weaknesses are. We all need to modify attitudes and help make safety the central consideration of every pilot decision.

Just one fatal accident is one too many. And during this recent eight-day period, we have already seen seven fatalities. Safety needs to be a priority in the helicopter community. Life needs to be a priority.

“The end-of-the-year holidays are just around the corner,” adds Kim Smith, IHST Co-Chair and Manager of the FAA Rotorcraft Directorate, “As pilots, we need to refocus our efforts on evaluating risk and fly safer so that our families will have fond memories of 2012 and not tragic ones.”

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