



HELICOPTER SAFETY NEWS

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U.S. Helicopter Safety Team Supports FAA Revisions to Autorotation Testing

WASHINGTON DC – The United States Helicopter Safety Team (www.ushst.org) is offering a supportive voice to recent changes made by the Federal Aviation Administration in its Practical Test Standards (PTS) for helicopter instructors. (https://www.faa.gov/training_testing/testing/test_standards/media/FAA-S-8081-7B.pdf)

“The revision provides examiners a path to mitigate some risks associated with the Flight Instructor PTS requirements to demonstrate proficiency in the touchdown portion of an autorotation,” explains Raj Helweg, USHST industry co-chairman and chief pilot of Air Methods. “If a CFI applicant has proven competence with this touchdown portion of an autorotation prior to the evaluation, these revised test standards offer flexibility and a greater margin of safety by eliminating the requirement to repeat these maneuvers during the practical test.”

The PTS still requires that instructional knowledge of either a straight-in or a 180-degree autorotation be demonstrated by a pilot to an examiner. However, in lieu of demonstrating the touchdown portion of an autorotation during the practical test, an examiner may instead accept, at his or her discretion, a logbook endorsement from the pilot’s instructor. The logbook endorsement, given by a current flight instructor who meets the requirements of 14 CFR § 61.195(h)(2), also must show that the CFI applicant has the required knowledge in autorotation tasks and has demonstrated competency in performing the touchdown portion of an autorotation as listed in the PTS.

Adds Tim Tucker, Chief Instructor for the Robinson Helicopter Company, “In some cases, a safety risk will be avoided because the touchdown portion of an autorotation will not need to be demonstrated to an examiner. Using the endorsement to meet the PTS requirements will allow for a CFI evaluation to be completed safely even when elements such as adverse wind, high gross weight, and high density altitudes are present. This is an important clarification in the PTS for examiners, flight instructors, and helicopter pilots and it supports the USHST’s safety focus through risk mitigation.”

The USHST has been working with the FAA to remove any ambiguity in recent PTS changes. More information about the USHST and autorotation safety can be found in a new autorotation page on its web site at <http://www.ushst.org/AUTOROTATIONS.aspx>

Since 2013, the U.S. Helicopter Safety Team has focused on the U.S. civil helicopter community and fatal accidents. Through 2015, total accidents have decreased for the second year in a row and the helicopter accident rate has been cut by 26 percent compared to 2013. In addition, fatal accidents are down 43 percent and the fatal accident rate is down 50 percent compared to three years ago.

Safety is Our 1st Priority