

Media Release: New helicopter flight safety initiative announced.

A new initiative to further improve flight safety has been announced by The NZ Helicopter Association (NZHA) a division of Aviation NZ.

This initiative follows 18 months work with the Information and Analysis section of the Civil Aviation Authority of NZ (CAA) and will see a more united focus on learning from helicopter accidents.

Operators are required by law to notify not only any accidents but also any safety incidents they have. CAA keeps this information in its database but up until now, that data has been analysed only by CAA. This new initiative will see CAA de-identifying the reports from operators, collating these into a spreadsheet and sending those to the NZHA Committee prior to its meetings. NZHA will examine the reports looking for trends and develop some resilience strategies that will be published by CAA in the form of bulletins and distributed by NZHA.

NZHA Executive Officer John Sinclair said 'although the commercial helicopter accident rate in NZ is very good, we are still having about 20 accidents each year and we have plateaued at that level for the last 14 years'.

'To get even better we need a new approach - and this is it', Sinclair said.

We need to start looking at the helicopter industry as a system. That system is made up of some 137 companies and some 1350 commercial pilots. Our challenge is that the industry sees itself as a lot of individuals rather than a *system*. There needs to be at least *some link* between operators, there needs to be at least *some recognition* that we are one system and that improving our safety performance is in all of our best interests. Nearly half of the helicopter industry comprises companies that have two or less helicopters and whilst the larger companies are often better "plugged in" to information about safety risks, that is not necessarily true for the rest of the industry. We want this new initiative to help close the "information gaps."

John Sinclair stressed that operator incident reports will get no extra attention from the operational divisions of CAA. This is an NZHA initiative, not a CAA one. The reports NZHA receive will have all the identifying information removed, even the location of the incident. The guiding principle will be that all information that could identify the operator will be removed. If any operators are still uncomfortable about the extra scrutiny their reports are getting they may make a note of that when they submit their incident notification and CAA will exclude NZHA from that particular report.

For further information contact John Sinclair, Executive Officer NZ Helicopter Association, 027 3142151 sinclairjg@gmail.com

BACKGROUND

Key facts about Aviation New Zealand

Aviation New Zealand (formerly the Aviation Industry Association of New Zealand 'AIA') exists to lead, inspire and grow the New Zealand aviation industry.

The AIA was established in 1950 to encourage the safe growth of the aviation industry in New Zealand. In more recent years, it has also become involved in helping the international development of its members.

- Aviation New Zealand has over 600 members
- Members include agricultural companies, air operators (fixed wing and rotary), aircraft designers and manufacturers, airports, aviation trainers, emergency and medical services companies, helicopter companies and parts manufacturers.

Key facts about aviation in New Zealand

An 'early adopter' in aviation terms – first international customer for Boeing; first pilot training school 1916; first airmail 1919; and quick appreciation of the suitability of aviation for agriculture, tourism and forestry.

4502 aircraft in New Zealand, one per thousand people, giving New Zealand one of the highest aircraft per capita ratios in the world.

Decades of policy innovation to support competition, safety and growth; 30m km² of safely managed airspace; and exports to over 80 countries on all continents.

Aircraft fit-outs, new aircraft (including UAVs), GPS track and tracing systems, high precision processes (for example bait and fire fighting), composites, titanium powders, and aviation industry business and operational systems are just some of the exciting technologies and practices developing in New Zealand which set the scene for growth in the next 100 years.