



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION**

**NOTICE  
N 8000.318**

Effective Date:  
3/2/06  
Cancellation Date:  
3/2/07

**SUBJ: PUBLIC HELICOPTER EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (HEMS)  
OPERATIONS**

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**1. PURPOSE.** This notice provides updated guidance for aviation safety inspectors (ASI) in all specialties regarding public Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) operations. The guidance includes actions to ensure that such operators are aware of current Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) policies and standards for HEMS operations, and to emphasize the importance of establishing compliance by public aircraft operators with applicable operating rules.

**2. DISTRIBUTION.** This notice is distributed to the division level in the Flight Standards Service in Washington headquarters; to the branch level in the regional Flight Standards divisions; to the Flight Standards District Offices, and to the Regulatory Standards Division at the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center. This notice is also distributed electronically to the division level in the Flight Standards Service in Washington headquarters and to all regional Flight Standards divisions and district offices. This information is also available on the FAA's Web site at: [http://www.faa.gov/library/manuals/examiners\\_inspectors/8000/media/N8000-318.doc](http://www.faa.gov/library/manuals/examiners_inspectors/8000/media/N8000-318.doc).

**3. BACKGROUND.**

**a. Introduction.** HEMS operations are conducted using both civil and public helicopters. Civil helicopters conduct these operations for hire under Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 135. HEMS operations are also conducted by public aircraft, such as those operated by a Governmental entity, and are not required to hold an FAA air carrier or operating certificate unless such operations result in compensation.

**b. Preliminary Review of Civil HEMS Accidents.** A preliminary review of the commercial HEMS accidents from January 1998 through December 2004 reveals that CONTROLLED FLIGHT INTO TERRAIN (CFIT), NIGHT OPERATIONS, AND INADVERTENT FLIGHT INTO INSTRUMENT METEOROLOGICAL CONDITIONS (IMC) are predominant factors. Of the 27 fatal HEMS accidents, 21 occurred during night operations. Of the 21 night accidents, 16 of the operations originated under visual flight rules (VFR) and inadvertently flew into IMC conditions resulting in CFIT. In addition, approximately 13 accidents during this timeframe were attributed to maintenance. See the table below.

|                                                 |           |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Total Number of HEMS Accidents ('98-'04)</b> | <b>85</b> |
| Fatal HEMS Accidents (all)                      | <b>27</b> |
| Day Operations                                  | <b>6</b>  |
| Night Operations                                | <b>21</b> |

In 16 of the 27 fatal accidents, VFR into IMC and CFIT are listed as contributing factors by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB).

c. The types and circumstances of the studied accidents indicate the need for the following:

- (1) Strengthening operational control;
- (2) Increasing pilot skill in adverse weather operations, especially in the avoidance of and recovery from inadvertent IMC;
- (3) Applying risk assessment in flight decisions;
- (4) Fostering collaborative decisionmaking between ground and flight personnel; and
- (5) Developing a safety culture in HEMS operations.

d. **FAA Efforts.** To meet these needs, the FAA has accomplished several actions that directly address the safety concerns revealed in the preliminary review. Specifically, the following documents have been issued:

(1) Notice 8000.293, Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) Operations, issued 1/28/05 (now more widely distributed by SAFO 06001);

(2) Notice 8000.301, Operational Risk Assessment Programs for Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS), issued 8/01/05  
([http://www.faa.gov/library/manuals/examiners\\_inspectors/8000/media/n8000-301.doc](http://www.faa.gov/library/manuals/examiners_inspectors/8000/media/n8000-301.doc));

(3) Notice 8000.307, Special Emphasis Inspection Program for Helicopter Emergency Medical Services, issued 9/27/05  
([http://www.faa.gov/library/manuals/examiners\\_inspectors/8000/media/N8000-307.doc](http://www.faa.gov/library/manuals/examiners_inspectors/8000/media/N8000-307.doc));

(4) Advisory Circular (AC) 00-64, Air Medical Resource Management, issued 9/22/05  
([http://www.airweb.faa.gov/Regulatory\\_and\\_Guidance\\_Library/rgAdvisoryCircular.nsf/0/b643be7ddea4b3af8625708c006529fc/\\$FILE/AC00-64.pdf](http://www.airweb.faa.gov/Regulatory_and_Guidance_Library/rgAdvisoryCircular.nsf/0/b643be7ddea4b3af8625708c006529fc/$FILE/AC00-64.pdf));

(5) HBAT 06-01, Helicopter Emergency Medical Services; OpSpec A021/A002 Revisions, issued 1/23/06  
([http://www.faa.gov/library/manuals/examiners\\_inspectors/8400/hbat/media/2006/hbat0601.doc](http://www.faa.gov/library/manuals/examiners_inspectors/8400/hbat/media/2006/hbat0601.doc));  
and

**(6)** HBAT 06-02, Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) Loss of Control (LOC) and Controlled Flight into Terrain (CFIT) Accident Avoidance Programs, issued 1/23/06 ([http://www.faa.gov/library/manuals/examiners\\_inspectors/8400/hbat/media/2006/hbat0602.doc](http://www.faa.gov/library/manuals/examiners_inspectors/8400/hbat/media/2006/hbat0602.doc))

**e.** The HEMS Task Force, consisting of representatives from the Flight Standards Service, the Aircraft Certification Service, and the Office of Aircraft Accident Investigation, continues to review accident data to determine the desired course(s) of action to address accident safety causal factors in the HEMS operating environment. Additional guidance will be developed as a result of this ongoing effort. Such guidance may be in the form of ACs, notices, handbook bulletins or revisions, and the Aeronautical Information Manual.

#### **4. DISCUSSION.**

**a.** The safety guidance that has been developed for the civil HEMS industry has wider application, to include the public HEMS community. While certain aspects of public HEMS operations are different from the civil sector, the operational safety considerations are the same.

**b.** Accordingly, the FAA will provide the current HEMS guidance documents to each identified public HEMS operation. Public HEMS operators should be encouraged to review FAA civil HEMS operations standards, and adopt those components that have application to their specific operation.

**c.** In addition, FAA personnel should be alert to indications of noncertificated public HEMS providers operating for compensation or hire contrary to the provisions of 14 CFR parts 119 and/or 135.

#### **5. ACTION.**

**a.** Flight Standards District Offices (FSDOs) will provide copies of this notice, and the documents cited in paragraph 3(d) to all public aircraft HEMS operators in their district. Where possible, electronic means should be used to minimize copying and postage costs.

**b.** Each ASI should be alert for indications that public HEMS operations are being conducted contrary to the definition of public aircraft (14 CFR part 1, section 1). Should such indications exist, such as a noted direct or indirect fee for HEMS service, further investigation should be initiated. Supporting guidance is contained in:

**(1)** FAA Order 8400.10, Air Transportation Operations Inspector's Handbook, Volume 1, Chapter 4, Section 8, Public Aircraft Operations;

**(2)** FAA Order 8700.1, General Aviation Operations Inspector's Handbook, Volume 1, Chapter 6, Section 5. Public Aircraft Operations;

**(3)** AC 00-1.1, Government Aircraft Operations;

**(4)** Public Law 103-411, Independent Safety Board Act Amendments of 1994; and

**(5)** HBAW 95-04, Government Aircraft Operations; Public Aircraft Operations Versus Civil Aircraft Operations.

**6. TRACKING.** Document the conveyance of the cited documents and this notice for each public HEMS operator:

**a.** Use Program Tracking and Reporting Subsystem (PTRS) codes 1030, 3030, 5030, Convey Non-Reg. Info.

**b.** Enter "N8000318" in the "National Use" field (without the quotes).

**c.** Once the initial notification is completed close out the PTRS.

**7. DISPOSITION.** This notice will be incorporated into Order 8400.10. Questions concerning this notice should be directed to the Commuter, On Demand, and Training Center Branch, AFS-250, at (202) 267-3437.

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY:

James J. Ballough  
Director, Flight Standards Service