



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Aviation  
Administration**

# SAFO

Safety Alert for Operators

SAFO 10015

DATE: 8/6/10

Flight Standards Service  
Washington, DC

[http://www.faa.gov/other\\_visit/aviation\\_industry/airline\\_operators/airline\\_safety/safo](http://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/safo)

*A SAFO contains important safety information and may include recommended action. SAFO content should be especially valuable to air carriers in meeting their statutory duty to provide service with the highest possible degree of safety in the public interest. Besides the specific action recommended in a SAFO, an alternative action may be as effective in addressing the safety issue named in the SAFO.*

**Subject:** Flying in the Wire Environment

**Purpose:** This SAFO advises operators flying aircraft lower than 1000 ft or less to be aware of the wire hazards in their areas of operation.

**Background:** The helicopter community in the United States, and world wide, perform their critical operations typically at 1000 ft or less and often times in a wire/obstruction rich environment. Collisions between aircraft and manmade obstacles have occurred since the beginning of manned flight. A 13 year query of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) database indicates a total of 996 reported aviation accidents/collisions involving wires/power lines in the United States. Of the 996 accidents 301 involved at least one fatality. That averages out to 76.6 accidents annually and with fatalities in 30% of the accidents.

**Discussion:** The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is working with the International Helicopter Safety Team (IHST) and supports their goal to reduce worldwide helicopter accidents by 80% by 2016. One initiative of the IHST is to encourage manufacturers and operators to install wire strike protection systems on their helicopters. The FAA has partnered with Southern California Edison and Helicopter Association International (HAI) to develop a video on wire strike avoidance awareness. The video describes the risk of operating both helicopters and fixed wing aircraft in the wire environment and avoidance techniques. The FAA hopes that this video will educate viewers about the risk of flying in the wire environment and prevent accidents. The video can be viewed by clicking on the following link, <http://www.rotor.com/Publications/HAIVideosLibrary/SurvivingtheWiresEnvironment.aspx>

**Recommended Action:** Pilots, directors of operations, chief pilots, training program managers, and training centers providing training in airplanes or helicopters should emphasize to pilots the inherent dangers of flying in the wire environment and ensure such information is incorporated into their pilot training program.

**Contact:** Questions or comments regarding the content of this SAFO should be directed to Edwin Miller, Part 135 Air Carrier Operations Branch, AFS-250, via phone at (202)-267-8166.