



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Office of the Administrator

800 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20591

March 15, 2022

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell:

Enclosed is the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) report to Congress on Collection of Data on Helicopter Air Ambulance Operations pursuant to Title 49 of the United States Code § 44731. This annual report contains a summary of the data received by FAA from helicopter air ambulance operators from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020.

We look forward to continued collaboration with your staff and would be happy to schedule time to brief you further if desired.

A similar letter has been sent to the Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and the Chair and Ranking Member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Dickson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steve" and last name "Dickson" clearly legible.

Steve Dickson
Administrator

Enclosure



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March 15, 2022

The Honorable Roger F. Wicker
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ranking Member Wicker:

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March 15, 2022

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio
Chair
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair DeFazio:

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March 15, 2022

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Graves:

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Steve Dickson
Administrator

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FAA
Aviation Safety

REPORT TO CONGRESS:

Collection of Data on Helicopter Air Ambulance Operations

Annual Report – Calendar Year 2020

Title 49 of the United States Code § 44731

Introduction

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) submits this report in accordance with Title 49 of the United States Code §44731, *Collection of Data on Helicopter Air Ambulance Operations* which mandates:

(a) IN GENERAL.—*The Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall require a part 135 certificate holder providing helicopter air ambulance services to submit to the Administrator, annually, a report containing, at a minimum, the following data:*

(1) *The number of helicopters that the certificate holder uses to provide helicopter air ambulance services and the base locations of the helicopters.*

(2) *The number of hours flown by the helicopters operated by the certificate holder.*

(3) *The number of patients transported and the number of patient transport requests for a helicopter providing air ambulance services that were accepted or declined by the certificate holder and the type of each such flight request (such as scene response, inter-facility transport, or organ transport).*

(4) *The number of accidents, if any, involving helicopters operated by the certificate holder while providing air ambulance services and a description of the accidents.*

(5) *The number of hours flown under instrument flight rules by helicopters operated by the certificate holder.*

(6) *The number of hours flown at night by helicopters operated by the certificate holder.*

(7) *The number of incidents, if any, in which a helicopter was not directly dispatched and arrived to transport patients but was not utilized for patient transport.*

(b) REPORTING PERIOD.—

Data contained in a report submitted by a part 135 certificate holder under subsection (a) shall relate to such reporting period as the Administrator determines appropriate.

(c) DATABASE.—

Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this section, the Administrator shall develop a method to collect and store the data collected under subsection (a), including a method to protect the confidentiality of any trade secret or proprietary information provided in response to this section.

(d) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—

The Administrator shall submit annually to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate a report containing a summary of the data collected under subsection (a). The report shall include the number of accidents experienced by helicopter air ambulance operations, the number of fatal accidents experienced by helicopter air ambulance operations, and the rate, per 100,000 flight hours, of accidents and fatal accidents experienced by operators providing helicopter air ambulance services.

(e) IMPLEMENTATION.—*In carrying out this section, the Administrator, in collaboration with a part 135 certificate holders providing helicopter air ambulance services, shall—*

(1) *propose and develop a method to collect and store the data submitted under subsection (a), including a method to protect the confidentiality of any trade secret or proprietary information submitted; and*

(2) ensure that the database under subsection (c) and the report under subsection (d) include data and analysis that will best inform efforts to improve the safety of helicopter air ambulance operations.

(f) DEFINITIONS.—

In this section, the terms “part 135” and “part 135 certificate holder” have the meanings given such terms in section 44730.

Response

Below is a summary of the 2020 data that § 44731 requires:

- (1) Report the number of helicopters that the certificate holder¹ uses to provide helicopter air ambulance (HAA) services and the base locations of the helicopters:
 - The total number of certificate holders providing HAA services during 2020 was 1,246. The FAA received reports from 63 operators. Of those, 50 operated between one and nine helicopters; eight operated between 10 and 99 helicopters; and five operated more than 100 helicopters. For operators that provide HAA services from multiple bases, 15 reported base locations of the helicopters in one state only, while 23 reported base locations in multiple states. The only state in which operators that provide HAA services did not report a base location of a helicopter was Rhode Island. Two operators reported an HAA base in Puerto Rico, one reported a base in the District of Columbia, and two operators reported three bases outside the United States. The total of all base locations from which HAA certificate holders operated was 987.
- (2) Report the number of hours flown by the helicopters operated by the certificate holders.
 - Overall, the operators reported a total of 397,321 hours flown. Three of the reporting operators reported zero hours flown in HAA operations.
- (3) Report the number of patients transported and the number of flight requests for helicopters providing air ambulance services that were accepted or declined by the certificate holder and the type of each such flight request (such as scene response, inter-facility transport, or organ transport).
 - The total number of patients transported in HAA services by operators that reported during 2020 was 306,358. A summary of the flight requests accepted or declined for the respective types of requests is depicted in the tables below:

¹ This Report uses the term “certificate holder” and “operator” interchangeably.

Flight Requests - Accepted	
Scene Response	102,959
Inter-Facility	227,808
Organ Transport	811

Flight Requests - Declined	
Scene Response	142,340
Inter-Facility	148,800
Organ Transplant	131

(4) Provide the number of accidents, if any, involving helicopters operated by the certificate holder while providing air ambulance services and a description of the accidents.

- Of the certificate holders that reported information in accordance with § 44731, three reported HAA accidents for this period. None of the three accidents resulted in fatalities.
- Appendix A of this report includes summaries of the three accidents involving HAA operators.
- The overall accident rate for HAA during 2020 was 0.76 per 100,000 flight hours. The fatal accident rate for HAA during 2020 was 0.00 accidents per 100,000 flight hours.

(5) Report the number of hours flown under instrument flight rules by helicopters operated by the certificate holder while providing air ambulance services.

- Of the 63 reporting operators, 31 reported zero flights and zero hours flown under instrument flight rules. The remaining 32 operators flew a total of 12,631 hours under instrument flight rules while providing air ambulance services.

(6) Report the number of hours flown at night by helicopters the certificate holder operated while providing air ambulance services.

- The total number of hours flown at night by the 63 reporting operators of helicopters during HAA operations was 174,536. Night hours are between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. local time. Four of the operators reported flying zero hours at night. The hours flown at night represent 44% of the total hours flown during HAA operations.

(7) Report the number of incidents, if any, in which a helicopter was not directly dispatched and arrived to transport patients, but was not utilized for patient transport.

- The 63 reporting operators cited zero incidents in which a helicopter was not directly dispatched and arrived to transport patients but was not utilized for patient transport.

Appendix A: Accidents Involving HAA Operations

Date	Description
03/04/2020	Bell 206L, Weather: Clear. Terrain: Smooth open field. Night Vision Goggles: In use. Crew onboard: Pilot, Nurse, and Medic. Patient on board: No. Pilot on duty 11 hours and 52 minutes before the accident. Pilot flew on shift 2.3 hours before the accident. Aircraft Damage: Crack and separation of an engine pneumatic line. Skids spread on touchdown with some structural damage. No injuries.
07/04/2020	MBB/Kawasaki BK-117 C2, Hard landing as a result of foreign object damage (construction-related silt fence) entering the rotor system. No injuries were sustained, but the aircraft had substantial damage.
11/06/2020	Agusta A109S, On final approach to the pad, the pilot reported that the helicopter nose started to turn right, as he increased left pedal to stop the yaw, there was no response. Yaw rate to the right increased even with full left pedal. The pilot then elected to put the helicopter down on the pad. Upon touching down, the helicopter rolled onto its left side. There was no post-crash fire and all occupants exited the aircraft unassisted. Minor injury.