



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

Office of the Administrator

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

October 18, 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) annual report to Congress on the Collection of Data on Helicopter Air Ambulance (HAA) Operations pursuant to Title 49 of the *United States Code* § 44731. This report contains a summary of the data received by the FAA from HAA certificate holders from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021.

The enclosed report includes the number of accidents experienced by HAA certificate holders, the number of fatal accidents experienced by HAA certificate holders, and the rate, per 100,000 flight hours, of accidents and fatal accidents experienced by operators providing HAA services. There were five reported HAA accidents for this period. None of the five accidents resulted in injuries or fatalities.

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, appearing to read "Billy Nolen", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Billy Nolen
Acting Administrator

Enclosure



U.S. Department
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800 Independence Ave., S.W.
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October 18, 2022

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

Dear Ranking Member Wicker:

Enclosed is the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) annual report to Congress on the Collection of Data on Helicopter Air Ambulance (HAA) Operations pursuant to Title 49 of the *United States Code* § 44731. This report contains a summary of the data received by the FAA from HAA certificate holders from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021.

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

Sincerely,

Billy Nolen
Acting Administrator

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

October 18, 2022

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

Dear Chair DeFazio:

Enclosed is the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) annual report to Congress on the Collection of Data on Helicopter Air Ambulance (HAA) Operations pursuant to Title 49 of the *United States Code* § 44731. This report contains a summary of the data received by the FAA from HAA certificate holders from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021.

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Billy Nolen
Acting Administrator

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

October 18, 2022

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

Dear Ranking Member Graves:

Enclosed is the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) annual report to Congress on the Collection of Data on Helicopter Air Ambulance (HAA) Operations pursuant to Title 49 of the *United States Code* § 44731. This report contains a summary of the data received by the FAA from HAA certificate holders from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021.

The enclosed report includes the number of accidents experienced by HAA certificate holders, the number of fatal accidents experienced by HAA certificate holders, and the rate, per 100,000 flight hours, of accidents and fatal accidents experienced by operators providing HAA services. There were five reported HAA accidents for this period. None of the five accidents resulted in injuries or fatalities.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Billy Nolen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Billy Nolen
Acting Administrator

Enclosure



FAA
Aviation Safety

REPORT TO CONGRESS:
Collection of Data on Helicopter Air Ambulance
Operations

Annual Report – Calendar Year 2021

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 data that § 44731 requires:

- (1) Number of helicopters that the certificate holder uses to provide helicopter air ambulance (HAA) services and the base locations of the helicopters:
 - The total number of helicopters that certificate holders used in providing HAA services during 2021 was 1,347. The FAA received reports from 64 operators. Of those, 48 operated between 1 and 9 helicopters; 10 operated between 10 and 99 helicopters; and 5 operated more than 100 helicopters. For operators that provide HAA services from multiple bases, 21 reported base locations of the helicopters in one state only, while 20 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. One certificate holder reported an HAA base in Puerto Rico, one reported a base in the District of Columbia, and four operators reported a total of four bases outside the United States. The total of all base locations from which HAA certificate holders operated was 1,025.
- (2) Number of hours flown by the helicopters operated by the certificate holders.
 - Overall, the operators reported a total of 500,691 hours flown. Six of the reporting operators reported zero hours flown in HAA operations.
- (3) Number of patients transported and the number of flight requests for helicopters providing HAA 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 by HAA services by operators that reported during 2021 was 346,576. A summary of the flight requests accepted or declined for the respective types of requests is depicted in the tables below:

Flight Requests - Accepted	
Scene Response	126,247
Inter-Facility	260,021
Organ Transport	737

Flight Requests - Declined	
Scene Response	129,735
Inter-Facility	134,196
Organ Transplant	146

(4) Number of accidents, if any, involving helicopters operated by the certificate holder while providing HAA services, and a description of the accidents.

- Of the certificate holders that reported information in accordance with § 44731, four reported a total of five HAA accidents for this reporting period. None of the five accidents resulted in injuries or fatalities.
- Appendix A of this report includes summaries of the five accidents that occurred during HAA operations.
- The overall accident rate for HAA during 2021 was 1.0 per 100,000 flight hours. The fatal accident rate for HAA during 2021 was 0.00 accidents per 100,000 flight hours.

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

- Of the 64 reporting operators, 34 reported zero flights and zero hours flown under instrument flight rules. The remaining 30 operators flew a total of 10,274 hours under instrument flight rules while providing HAA services.

(6) Number of hours flown at night by helicopters the certificate holder operated while providing HAA.

- The total number of hours flown at night by the 64 reporting operators of helicopters during HAA operations was 204,321. Seven of the operators reported flying zero hours at night. The hours flown at night represent 41 percent of the total hours flown during HAA operations.

(7) 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 64 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
02/13/2021	Agusta AW119, At 1053 central time, Pilot and 2 medical crewmembers departed their base in clear, daylight conditions to pick up a patient. While performing a climbing left turn, the helicopter main rotor blade struck an unknown object. The helicopter was approximately 1 mile from the departure point at the time of the incident. The pilot and crew returned to the base. Damage to the main rotor blade was discovered with a dent on the leading edge and a hole through the blade aft of the dent. No injuries.
02/24/2021	Airbus EC130, Pilot failed to maintain directional control during a hover taxi maneuver at the Tulsa Riverside Airport, resulting in a hard landing. Incident occurred at approximately 23:00 local time, weather was not a factor, Night Vision Goggles (NVG) were available but not in use. Three persons on board, no patient. There were no injuries.
10/06/2021	Bell 429, Pilot was landing back at the base following patient dropoff at Strong Hospital in Rochester, NY at approximately 2110 local time when aircraft entered low level fog bank at 200' that obscured a portion of the airfield. Three medical crewmembers and the pilot were onboard with the duty crew using NVGs while a flight nurse in training was not using NVGs. All crewmembers saw the runway, taxiway, and hangar lights while descending through 250' above ground level (AGL) then entered inadvertent instrument meteorological conditions (IIMC) at 200'. When aircraft entered IIMC conditions, the pilot attempted an IIMC recovery resulting in loss of airspeed and the helicopter impacted the ground and came to rest just North of the airport fence upright. All crew egressed successfully and were evaluated at the local hospital and released. Aircraft sustained substantial damage to the skids and lifting frame. No injuries.
10/16/2021	Eurocopter AS 350, While on approach to landing at Tucson Medical Center, the pilot failed to maintain adequate clearance from obstacles, resulting in the tail rotor coming into contact with a large fire extinguisher positioned on the helipad. Incident occurred at approximately 1300 local time, weather was not a factor. 4 on board, including a patient. There were no injuries.

11/22/2021	Leonardo AW169, At approximately 14:34 local time, the aircraft was enroute to hospital with a patient on board when a black vulture impacted the aircraft causing to the windshield, windshield support beam, and greenhouse window resulting in substantial damage to the windshield support beam. The pilot diverted the helicopter to a nearby helipad and landed without further incident. There were no injuries.
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