
Dedicated to the Advancement of the International Helicopter Community

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HAI Statement on NTSB Recommendation to Install Flight Data Monitoring Equipment

Alexandria, Va. (June 03, 2020) – The US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has recently recommended that six helicopter manufacturers make installation of data, voice, and video recorders standard on all new turbine helicopters. The NTSB’s mission is to make transportation safer, and this is a goal that HAI wholeheartedly supports. With a few adjustments, such as the inclusion of piston aircraft and targeting the use of these devices to reduce the top three causes of fatal accidents, HAI believes that the NTSB proposal could bring measurable safety improvements to the helicopter industry.

HAI agrees with the NTSB that flight-data monitoring (FDM) is an important tool that can be used to increase operational efficiency and identify hazards. In fact, our association has for years partnered with the FAA Rotorcraft Aviation Safety Information Analysis and Sharing Program ([R-ASIAS](#)) to bring the benefits of data collection and analysis to more operators.

Industry manufacturers are also increasingly moving in this direction. For example, the majority of Airbus helicopters come off the manufacturing line with data and audio recorders and imaging systems installed. Voice and flight-data recorders are standard equipment on Sikorsky commercial aircraft. Over the years, FDM equipment has become less expensive, lighter, and easier to operate, placing this technology within the reach of the average operator.

However, the NTSB’s proposal targets turbine helicopters, leaving out the more than one-third of the US fleet that uses piston engines. This focus on turbine aircraft seems unsupported by data showing no measurable safety difference between turbine and piston aircraft.

The NTSB proposal also does not directly address a specific safety issue. However, some findings by the US Helicopter Safety Team (USHST) shed light on where FDM would provide a measurable improvement in safety.

The [USHST has recommended the use of FDM](#) to monitor aircraft and engine performance, detect and correct procedural noncompliance by flight crews, and preserve more data relevant to accident investigations. The USHST has also [identified FDM as a strategy in preventing the top three causes of fatal helicopter accidents](#): loss of control in flight, unintended instrument meteorological conditions, and low-altitude operations.

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NTSB STATEMENT

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All helicopter operators should consider installing FDM as it will provide them with the tools to reduce accidents and improve overall industry safety. Besides promoting FDM within the industry, HAI will add installation of FDM and other NTSB recommendations to its [Accreditation Program of Safety](#) as an additional way in which participating operators can fly to a higher standard.

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HAI is the professional trade association for the international helicopter industry. HAI members represent more than 3,000 aviation businesses and individuals who safely operate more than 4,500 helicopters approximately 2.3 million hours each year in more than 73 nations. HAI is dedicated to the promotion of the helicopter as a safe, effective method of commerce and to the advancement of the international helicopter community.