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HAI Statement on NTSB’s 2021 – 2022 Most Wanted List of Transportation Safety Improvements

Alexandria, Va. (April 7, 2021) – The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) met April 6, 2021, to select the items for the agency’s 2021–2022 Most Wanted List of Transportation Safety Improvements. Two of the 10 items on the list would affect the rotorcraft industry:

- From the NTSB Office of Aviation Safety, the recommendation is to “Require and Verify the Effectiveness of Safety Management Systems (SMS) in All Revenue Passenger-Carrying Aviation Operations”
- From the NTSB Office of Research and Engineering, the recommendation is to “Install Crash-Resistant Recorders and Establish Flight Data Monitoring Programs.”

HAI is grateful to the directors and staff of the NTSB for their continued efforts to improve US transportation safety,” says James Viola, president and CEO of HAI. “We agree and support their recommendation to require SMS programs for all passenger-carrying operations, and encourage the use of recorders and flight-data monitoring (FDM) programs.” HAI has adopted a 360-degree approach to safety that includes development of a personal and corporate safety culture, the appropriate use of technology, and lifelong training.

“HAI strongly recommends that all aviation operations, not just those that carry passengers for hire, adopt an SMS program,” adds Viola. “An SMS provides a structured, ongoing process to improve operational safety and is endorsed by aviation regulators and safety organizations around the world as the best way to systematically manage aviation risk.”

Properly managed SMS programs start with buy-in at the highest level of a company. Application of the SMS program then expands to include every employee, recognizing that each staff member must take personal responsibility to identify and report operational hazards and to follow established policies and procedures. “This commitment to safety, from top to bottom, has been shown to reduce the risk of accidents,” continues Viola.

“When it comes to recorders and FDM, I want to be clear that HAI supports the installation and use of this equipment in passenger-carrying operations. All Part 135 operations have a duty to operate at the highest level of safety,” says Viola. “Some missions, such as firefighting, logging, utility construction and maintenance, search and rescue, and offshore passenger transport, are unique in their execution and, as such, often require tailored safety practices, including the safety equipment selected for installation.”

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To further reduce accidents in the vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) industry, HAI again points to the value of continual training for all pilots, starting at the earliest stages of their careers. “For pilots, the development of a personal safety culture must begin on the first day of flight school and never stop,” Viola says. “Throughout their careers, pilots need recurrent training to ensure they remain current, competent, and confident in their ability to execute standard and emergency procedures, able to bring every flight in for a safe landing.”

“Again, we extend our appreciation to the staff and board members of the NTSB for their time, expertise, and efforts to improve flight safety, as well as safety in all forms of transportation in the United States,” says Viola.

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HAI is the professional trade association for the international helicopter industry and represents more than 1,100 global companies and over 16,000 industry professionals in more than 65 countries. Each year, HAI members safely operate more than 3,700 helicopters and remotely piloted aircraft approximately 2.9 million hours. 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.