

Terms of reference –

Vertical Aviation Safety Team (VAST)

Special Projects Working Group - Safety Rating for Helicopters

Background

Under the newly launched VAST structure, working groups may be established to assist regional safety teams and/or global vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) aircraft stakeholders in any number of duties including the collection, analysis, and distribution of useful information germane to the VTOL industry. VAST working groups operate in a collaborative manner under the direction of the VAST Advisors and with the guidance of the VAST Steering Committee.

Civil Aviation Authorities and industry groups have individually proposed the development of a safety rating scheme for helicopter. This mechanism could lead to safety enhancements for both the manufacturers and the operators. On one hand, it is an effective way for manufacturers to identify improvement areas and focus on safety performance. On the other hand, this can be used as a valuable marketing tool that provides detailed data to operators on the safety characteristics and equipment installed in their rotorcraft. The FAA and EASA have expressed support for Safety Ratings and have published preliminary documents. Safety Ratings has increased public safety in other industries without regulatory requirements.

Objectives

The objective of this initiative is to improve safety through incentivising innovation and implementation of enhancing technologies into the new and current fleet of helicopters. The current focus is to develop a scheme and an implementation plan for a world-wide voluntary safety rating scheme that is reflective of the helicopter in its operational context.

The scheme should define the mechanisms to setup the rating, including the role and responsibilities and define a set of criteria based on which the rating will be performed. The scheme should consider the possible evolution of the criteria over time and the differentiation based on the market or type of operation. The overall objective is to improve the safety performance of helicopter operations by creating a differentiating factor between product based on safety considerations. In addition, particular attention should be put on communication and education of all rotorcraft stakeholders of available design and equipment safety enhancements and increase their awareness of the benefits. Stakeholders include not only manufacturers, but also suppliers, owners, operators, pilots, aircrew, and passengers.

Assumptions:

- The scheme or schemes will be done for the sole purpose of improving safety,
- The rating focuses on the Helicopter including all systems and equipment (no gyroplanes, tiltrotors, eVTOL, ...) and not the operator,
- All helicopters are certified in accordance with regulations. This initiative is intended to both reflect the safety relevance of a particular certification level and incentivise the

implementation of safety enhancements beyond that of the helicopter's certification basis.

- Due consideration to the type of operation should be given in the definition of the criteria for the rating,
- The set of criteria should be transparent, and a process put in place to review and when needed update the criteria,
- The implementation will be done on a voluntary basis and led by the industry,
- Rating will be assigned to each individual helicopter considering the type of operations it is intended for and its standard, mission-specific and additional (optional) equipment.

Membership:

The VAST Safety Rating working group is staffed by members of the regional safety teams, safety authorities (as defined in the VAST Charter), or other global VTOL safety stakeholders (organizations including councils, committees; industry original equipment manufacturers, safety organizations, training providers, and others as appropriate). It will be managed by two co-chairs, normally one from the industry stakeholders and one from the aviation authorities. Co-chairs are chosen by a majority of the voting members. There are no limits to the number of voting members in this working group except that only one (1) representative from any company or organization may be a voting member of an individual working group. The two co-chairs will be voting members. The working group may bring in other non-voting experts to advise on technical and other issues. Co-chairs of working groups are automatically considered non-voting advisors to all other working groups.