



OUR VISION: A Civil Helicopter Community with Zero Fatal Accidents

HELICOPTER SAFETY NEWS

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Who Rates Best to Avoid Fatal Helicopter Accidents? Who Rates Worst?

WASHINGTON DC – Sometimes, numbers don’t reflect the truth. To understand the real story, some numbers need to be placed in the proper context alongside additional data. This also holds true when the safety experts from the U.S. Helicopter Safety Team (www.USHST.org) analyze accident data.

The USHST has looked at 11 years of helicopter operations data from 2009 through the end of 2019 and compared the share of flight hours of every industry type with the percentage share of fatal accidents within those industries. During this period, U.S. civil helicopters flew nearly 34 million flight hours and experienced 233 fatal accidents. Comparing the share of flight hours with the share of fatal accidents within each industry area, the USHST developed this list:

Industry	% of Flight Hours	% of FATAL Accidents	Variance	
1. Instructional	17	7	+10	Better than expected
2. Aerial Observe/Police/News	18	10	+8	Better than expected
3. Air Tour/Sightseeing	10	5	+5	Better than expected
4. Other (positioning, proficiency)	5	0	+5	Better than expected
5. Offshore/Oil	8	4	+4	Better than expected
6. Air Ambulance	16	13	+3	Better than expected
7. Firefighting	3	1	+2	At expectations
8. Business/Corporate	4	5	-1	At expectations
9. External Load/Logging	2	4	-2	At expectations
10. Commercial (air taxi, for hire)	5	8	-3	Worse than expected
11. Aerial Application	5	9	-4	Worse than expected
12. Utilities/Construction	4	8	-4	Worse than expected
13. Personal/Private	3	26	-23	Worse than expected

Although instructional flying, aerial observation, air ambulance operations and sightseeing tours have their share of fatal accidents, the numbers are lower than would be expected when compared to their share of flight hours. For example, helicopters within the air tour and sightseeing industry fly 10 percent of U.S. helicopter flight hours, so it would be expected that they would experience 10 percent of all fatal accidents. However, this is not the case. As an industry, they operate more safely than the data would predict.