

We Work Better Together: Pilots and Crews Detecting Risk Issues Inflight

In recent years, there has been a realization that total elimination of human error is impossible. We are human and we accomplish tasks in human ways. When we apply this fact to the issue of reducing helicopter accidents, to succeed we will require a better understanding of how aviators manage their errors in ways so that consequences are contained or made a nonfactor.

Research in areas such as Crew Resource Management and the Human Factors Analysis and Classification System has shown that the great majority of accidents derive from human factors issues and not aircraft system failure. While a great deal has been accomplished to support the pilot in the area of safety management, very little has been done to integrate the rest of the flight crew and non-flying personnel into the safety effort.

With this challenge in mind, a working group within the U.S. Helicopter Safety Team (www.USHST.org) is reviewing current literature and practice in this area. We are especially interested in improving awareness-based detection and in reducing the very human attitude of complacency, which usually resides at the top of every list of human factors concerns that result in lax safety and accidents.

The goal of this USHST working group is to provide guidance to the aviation community on better ways to identify risk, communicate those risks to other crewmembers, and determine the best course of mitigation. Once we have reviewed existing literature and studies on this topic, we will develop and share a logical and applicable set of recommendations for the training of pilots and the training of non-flying personnel. We want all the people on that helicopter flight, no matter what their specialty or experience, to understand the tasks of safely flying the aircraft and to comprehend how the priorities of a flight can change because of risk issues.