AirCom Recommendation 011

Human External Cargo (HEC) Mission Briefing and Safety Check

A mission briefing prior to a HEC (Human External Cargo) mission should be integrated into helicopter operations as part of continuous risk management.

The mission briefing should include at least the following points:

* Reconnaissance of the operational location to determine the approach, departure, and emergency exit path for the helicopter
* Identifying obstacles and potential hazards for the aircraft and the ground personnel at the mission site
* Selecting the correct sling/cable length, taking into consideration rotor downwash and environmental conditions
* Assessing the required hovering performance and performing a power check to ensure the helicopter has enough performance margin to safely execute the mission

Additionally for sling load operations:

* Inspecting the sling and attachment points before takeoff (e.g. carabiners, helicopter belly hooks)
* Verifying that the helicopter’s doors and hatches are closed and that the skids are clear

Additionally for hoist operations:

* Rechecking the hoist operator’s PCDS and connection of the lifeline to an approved suspension point in the helicopter before opening the cabin door
* Rechecking the proper security of other persons and loose objects in the cabin before opening the cabin door
* Checking the rescue hoist system for proper function

Prior to the extraction of HEC, a safety check should be performed. The check shall be executed as soon as the load is free from the ground but at a height where it can be put back to the pickup point immediately and safely.

The safety check should include at least the following points:

Rescuer/Winchman

* Helicopter is centered above the load
* Load is clear of the ground
* No entanglement of the load
* Proper mount and fit of rigging and equipment under load
* Proper mount and function of assisting aids like taglines or anti rotation devices under load

Pilot/Aircrew

* Power Check
* Obstacle situation
* Correct hanging position of the load
* No rotation of the load

The successful completion of the safety check must be communicated via radio or a predefined hand signal. The same applies to an abort in case of a negative safety check.

If the safety check is completed, the crew is clear to further lift the load and depart the scene.