

# Assessing the Safety Risk in **Part 135**

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The CAA is building a sector risk profile of the Part 135\* passenger air transport sector. What are the risks that community is managing? More importantly, what can be done to reduce those risks?

**A** CAA sector risk profile analysis is under way, trying to get a picture from industry as to how the risks to safety are spread throughout Part 135 passenger air transport operations.

Since September 2011, the accident rate per 100,000 hours flown by helicopters on air transport operations has increased from 4.1 to 7.4. Since 2012, the small aeroplane airline sector has exceeded the accident rate for the rest of the commercial aeroplane sector.

Currently however, the CAA's understanding of risk in the helicopter and fixed wing passenger air transport sector is limited to reported accident and occurrence data.

A sector risk profile allows the CAA to have a look at the various underlying influences on safety in a given area. By breaking down the overall risk into specifics, we can focus on distinct problems. For example, 'reducing landing accidents' is more easily addressed than simply 'reducing accidents'.

Jack Stanton, manager of the CAA's Intelligence, Safety and Risk Analysis unit, says an external company is conducting the risk profiling.

"They will be gathering information from industry, through workshops, surveys, and interviews, on the basis that participants are the best ones to evaluate the risks they face.

"All information will be de-identified before being collated and passed to the CAA. We are interested in risks prevalent across the sector, not those specific to one operator, so it doesn't need to know who said what. That's the essential difference between a sector risk profile and an operator risk profile."

The resulting mix of fact and opinion is combined with data from formal studies, and expressed as a set of 'risk statements' that describe the likelihood of a particular risky event occurring, and its consequence.

\*Air Operations – Helicopters and Small Aeroplanes

"The CAA and operators can then allocate resources according to need, and respond according to urgency," says Jack.

The analysis will focus first on rotary wing operations for two reasons. Firstly, two-thirds of Part 135 participants are involved in helicopter operations. Secondly, as mentioned, the accident rate of Part 135 rotary operations has risen to 7.4 accidents per 100,000 flying hours. That compares with 3.0 for Part 135 fixed wing ops. (See page six of the Aviation Safety Summary report, [www.caa.govt.nz](http://www.caa.govt.nz), "Safety Info – Safety Reports".)

"We are particularly interested in how risk alters for rotary wing operators, depending on what activity they're engaged in," says CAA Intelligence Analyst Dominik Gibbs.

"From, for instance, carrying passengers, to fighting fires. We want to know if mixed operations introduce additional risks, or if the additional experience gained mitigates risk."

Dominik, who has oversight of much of the Part 135 project, says that while risk profiles help the CAA in targeting its actions and resources, there are likely to be some areas of risk beyond its effective influence.

"Some operations may carry risks highly dependent on the actions of individual participants, organisations, or industry groups.

"The greatest value of a sector risk profile is to be had, therefore, when participants read the risk statements, decide which ones apply to their organisation, then determine what they can do to minimise that risk. In that way, the overall accident rate, and costs to the sector, are reduced."

In the coming weeks the CAA will write to you with further information and the details of the company that will be carrying out the risk profiling. The company will then get in touch regarding your Part 135 operation and how you can be involved.

The completed risk profile analysis will be presented to the CAA on 30 June 2015, and later, in industry forums. ■