

# UK offshore helicopter operations amongst the safest in the world

**Oil & Gas UK has published an updated report reviewing the safety record of offshore helicopter operations. The report, which covers 30 years of data from 1977 – 2006, confirms that the United Kingdom continental shelf is the leading region for offshore helicopter safety, in spite of the most recent accidents.**

Chris Allen, a director at Oil & Gas UK, explained: "This report updates information published by the HSE in 2003 in response to workers' concerns that offshore helicopter operations were a high risk mode of transport. This perception, however, is not matched by the statistical evidence. Whilst there have been a number of tragic helicopter accidents, the overall

safety record is in fact a good one, when compared with most other forms of UK land-based passenger transport. Indeed, when comparing passenger fatality rates, offshore helicopter travel is eighteen times safer than riding a motorbike and of a similar order to travelling by car."

Further results show that UKCS helicopter accident rates compare favourably with world-wide rates. During the period 1995 – 2005 (the latest period for which a world-wide comparison is possible), the UKCS reported one accident resulting in fatalities, whereas 63 accidents including fatalities were recorded world-wide.

Chris Allen added: "If we compare current performance with that of the first decade (1977 –

1986), a significant improvement has taken place. This has been achieved through the introduction of modern helicopter types, combined with extensive research into improving offshore helicopter safety which has resulted in several significant safety initiatives.

"However, despite having a fleet of some of the most up-to-date and technologically advanced helicopters, in the last ten years we have had two fatal crashes in July 2002 (Leman Field) and December 2006 (Morecambe Bay). These tragic accidents remind everyone that offshore helicopters operate in a difficult environment and we must continue our efforts to further minimise the risks." ■