

## **Additional Issues with Helicopter Transfer Operations**

Marine Notice 7/2006 refers to Helicopter Transfer Operations and identifies issues with ship's crew members approaching the aircraft without the helicopter pilot's approval and on occasions from behind the aircraft. Marine Notice 7/2006 remains relevant and is not superseded by this Marine Notice.

For helicopter operations AMSA has issued Marine Orders Part 57 - Helicopter Operations which can be accessed from the AMSA website. This Order references the Australian Code of Safe Practice for Ship-Helicopter Transfers.

Helicopter transfer operations are a key shipboard activity involving the safety of the vessel, its personnel, and the helicopter itself. AMSA expects to see in a vessel's documented Safety Management System procedures relating to helicopter transfer operations and importantly, evidence that drills and training in helicopter transfer operations have taken place. Procedures and training must include dealing with helicopter emergencies.

AMSA has become aware of a number of cases in which vessels under the jurisdiction of the *Navigation Act 1912* have conducted helicopter transfer operations in which the on-board procedures have not adequately addressed all safety aspects. In some cases helicopters have been landing on designated 'winch only' areas. When such incidents are identified, the incident may be investigated for possible criminal prosecution under Marine Orders 57 or other appropriate action.

Section 4 of the Australian Code of Safe Practice for Ship-Helicopter Transfers currently exempts pilot transfers from the prescriptive strength requirements of the Code. This aspect of the Code is currently under review, and in the interim, it is expected that Masters take into consideration the structural strength of any intended helicopter landing site with regard to maximum helicopter loads that can be withstood. It is expected that the Master will liaise with and receive approval from the helicopter pilot prior to directing operations to any landing site.

AMSA reminds all those involved in helicopter transfer operations in Australian waters to ensure that arrangements, equipment, instructions and training comply with the Australian Code of Safe Practice for Ship-Helicopter Transfers available from any AMSA office or the AMSA web site.

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August 2008

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