



Marine Notice 9/2016  
Supersedes 14/2011

## Vessel-helicopter operations

### Purpose

This Marine Notice provides information to the maritime industry and helicopter operators and pilots on the requirements for vessel-helicopter operations.

### Background

*Marine Order 57 (Helicopter operations) 2016 (MO57)* has effect from 1 May 2016 and replaces the previous Marine Order. It contains requirements to ensure that vessel-helicopter operations continue to be conducted with very high levels of operational awareness and safety.

Australia's safety arrangements for vessel-helicopter operations specify that vessel arrangements must be at least as effective in ensuring safety as the arrangements recommended in the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) *Guide to Helicopter/Ship Operations*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2008 (ICS Guide).

### Marine Order 57

MO57 specifies that:

- the master shall ensure that on-board arrangements, equipment, training and drills are at least as effective in ensuring safety as those outlined in the ICS Guide;
- the arrangements, equipment, crew training and drills for vessel-helicopter operations are included in the vessel's safety management system and the master has given relevant instructions to the crew;

- documentary evidence is on board regarding the ability of any deck surface of a vessel on which a helicopter is likely to land to withstand the loads imposed by a helicopter landing on that surface;
- detailed communication is undertaken between the master of the vessel and helicopter operator or pilot regarding any information necessary for the safe conduct of a vessel-helicopter operation, including the location and size of the helicopter landing/winch area and that they are obstacle free.

Vessel masters, owners and crew are to comply with all requirements of MO57 that are applicable to them.

The operator, owner or master of a vessel may wish to obtain specific advice about the types of helicopters used and the types of helicopter operations performed in a particular port in Australia. Such information would need to be available well in advance of the vessel's arrival because many ports transfer their marine pilots using helicopters. Ships' agents may assist by liaising with relevant port authorities.

### Communication

Effective communication between a vessel and helicopter in preparation for and during helicopter operations is essential to ensure safety. This may involve messages passed between the vessel operator, the ship's agent and the helicopter operator. Communication during helicopter operations will generally be between the helicopter and the vessel.

When preparing for and conducting a vessel-helicopter operation, it is essential that the vessel's master ensures that all necessary information for the safe conduct of the operation, including the details of the landing or winching area, is provided to the helicopter operator or pilot. The master may also wish to obtain all important helicopter information such as helicopter weight, landing gear type and rotor diameter.

It is good practice that the receipt of all communications be formally acknowledged.

### Strength of helicopter landing area

It is a requirement of MO57 that the owner of a vessel ensures that documentary evidence regarding deck strength of a vessel on which a helicopter is likely to land be available on board. This information must include the ability of any deck surface of the vessel to withstand the static and dynamic loads imposed by a helicopter landing on that surface. This information could be obtained from:

- a. the classification society that carries out the vessel's surveys;
- b. the shipbuilder that built the vessel; or
- c. the flag State of the vessel.

### Helicopter landing & winching areas

Helicopter landing areas can consist of purpose built landing pads or areas of the vessel's deck that do not have any obstructions in accordance with the 'clear area' requirements of the ICS Guide.

The owner is responsible for determining the location and size of a landing or winching area on a vessel.

Only in an emergency may the master instead of the owner make this determination.

Any obstacle within a helicopter landing and winching area should be marked if it does not comply with the recommendations for obstacles in the ICS Guide.

In determining safe vessel arrangements the Master should consider that a safe means of access to and from the helicopter landing area or the helicopter winching operations

area is properly marked and maintained, including any fittings associated with it such as ladders, hand rails, steps, stanchions, stanchion supports, hand holds, foot holds etc. This is particularly important as such fittings may be used infrequently and deterioration may go unnoticed.

### Firefighting appliances and rescue equipment

It is a requirement of MO57 that the equipment necessary for the safe conduct of vessel-helicopter operations, including firefighting appliances and rescue equipment must be at least as effective as that specified in the ICS Guide.

Reference should also be made to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Chapter II-2 Regulation 18 on helicopter facilities (in particular regulation 18.2.2).

### Further information:

- Marine Order 57 is available on AMSA's website at: [www.amsa.gov.au/vessels/standardsregulations/marine-orders/](http://www.amsa.gov.au/vessels/standardsregulations/marine-orders/)
- The *ICS Guide to Helicopter/Ship Operations*, 4th Edition (2008)

The ICS Guide is available to purchase from the International Chamber of Shipping website publications link at <http://www.ics-shipping.org/>

Copies may be available for loan through the Australian Libraries Gateway at <https://www.nla.gov.au/libraries/>

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