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RISK MANAGEMENT FOR AIR AMBULANCE HELICOPTER OPERATORS

Rich Adams

Advanced Aviation Concepts
719 Ocean Dunes Circle
Jupiter, Florida 33477

Jack Thompson

Systems Control Technology, Inc.
1611 North Kent Street, Suite 910
Arlington, Virginia 22209

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16. Abstract <p>This manual is intended to provide an easy reference for dealing with the operating pitfalls, the human frailties, and the risks in managing an air ambulance operation. It is not designed to give the operator step-by-step instructions. Rather, the manual describes techniques and tools that can be used to balance the demands of running a business with the need for maintaining safety. It provides pilot selection and training guidelines, as well as a review of a risk assessment technique that have proven successful for Part 135 operators. In addition, the manual recommends a workable format for establishing standard operating procedures to reduce risks. Finally, it highlights the key concerns that should be carefully considered from a risk management viewpoint.</p> <p>This operators manual is one of an integrated set of five Aeronautical Decision Making (ADM) manuals developed by the Federal Aviation Administration in a concerted effort to reduce the number of human factor related helicopter accidents. It can be used as one element of a comprehensive program for improving safety, reducing risk and, hopefully, the high cost of helicopter hull and liability insurance. The other four documents of the set are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. ADM for Helicopter Pilots (DOT/FAA/PM-86/45)2. ADM for EMS Helicopter Pilots -- Learning from Past Mistakes (DOT/FAA/DS-88/5)3. ADM for EMS Helicopter Pilots -- Situational Awareness Exercises (DOT/FAA/DS-88/6)4. ADM for Air Ambulance Hospital Administrators (DOT/FAA/DS-88/8)					
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PREFACE

Everyone involved with the space shuttle Challenger loss over Florida on January 28, 1986, carries its memory. But one person, the NASA manager who gave final approval for the Challenger launch, must feel a particularly strong sense of grief and responsibility. Caught between the pressure to satisfy politicians, the American people, and NASA's launch schedule and a complicated array of possible system failures, he/she made a decision that proved wrong - fatally wrong.

On a more routine (but no less potentially lethal) basis, most air ambulance managers are caught between the pressure to run an efficient, lean, and responsive operation and the ever-present possibility that an overlooked or underestimated critical part, like that O-ring on the booster rocket, will fail. In the air ambulance business, the human element is the weak link, or critical part, that can fail more often than not. As that NASA manager knows only too well, no matter who the pilot-in-command is, the manager who selects that pilot, sets crew standards, duty cycles, establishes company weather minimums and other operating standards is ultimately responsible for mission safety.

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