

PRODUCT SAFETY DIRECTIVE

Important Safety Notice
Concerning Helicopter Longlines with Protective Jackets

July 13th, 2011

Important Safety Notice Concerning Helicopter Longlines with Protective Jackets

To: All helicopter longline owners and users

Barry was made aware of a recent incident involving a longline, which we believe should be communicated to the industry.

This incident was reported to us by one of our test pilots who was flying with a synthetic longline protected by a hook-and-loop (Velcro) jacket made by another manufacturer.

Reported conditions:

- Helicopter model: Bell 407
- Pilot had been flying for approx. 10 hours carrying loads back and forth on a distance of approx. 45 km (28 miles)
- Conditions: Rainy, very humid
- Flying speed: Approx. 80 knots
- Longline has approx. 4 years of use
- Length of longline: 75'
- Type of protective jacket: Single layer Cordura-type fabric, closed with hook-and-loop (Velcro). No internal pocket or divider.

Reported incident:

During a flight, while the load was still attached to the longline under the helicopter, the pilot looked in his mirror and could see the protective jacket flying close to the tail rotor, only attached to the top of the longline.

He reported that the jacket probably opened (hook-and loop separated) near the mid-point of the longline, and with the wind, ripped open all the way to the bottom. The connection (snaps with hook-and-loop) of the jacket to that last portion near the bottom thimble could not resist and detached, resulting in the jacket trailing almost horizontally. Upon realizing the problem, the pilot slowed down and landed to fix the problem.

No further damage was observed.

Recommendations:

Although this may be an isolated event, we believe this problem could happen with any longline with a fabric protective jacket, with either a hook-and-loop or zipper closure, if the closure system is defective or becomes worn or damaged. Hook-and-loop closure can lose much of its strength if it becomes dirty and wet or simply worn out from heavy use. ***An opened and unattached jacket could potentially fly in the tail rotor, with dangerous consequences.***

As with any components of a longline (rope, thimbles, ring, electrical wire, etc.), the protective jacket must be inspected before each use and replaced if worn or defective. It should also be installed properly as per manufacturer's instructions.

Flying speed when using a longline should be adjusted accordingly, and if the pilot perceives a problem, he should slow down immediately, visually identify the problem and land securely as soon as possible.

Please contact Barry if you have any questions with regards to this notice.



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