

IAATO Vessel Helicopter Guidelines and Etiquette

Helicopter operations on board vessels require rules and regulations that extend beyond the standard vessel operating procedures. The guidelines that follow are primarily for recreational helicopter activities, but all helicopter operations undertaken by IAATO member vessels must follow them.

Please ensure that the use of helicopters is included in your operators permit/ authorisation conditions (Advance Notification and EIA, Waste Management Permit etc.). All aircrafts must carry equipment and operate as required by laws and rules within the permit/authorisation agreement.



This document is divided into three subsections:

1. Safety
2. Environment
3. Etiquette

Safety:

1. Good communication and appropriate maintenance are the most important factors for successful and safe helicopter operations:
 - i. It is essential the ship's Master, the Expedition Leader, the Pilot in Command, and any others involved in the operation understand their respective responsibilities.
 - ii. All plans for helicopter operation, whether reconnaissance, or landing flights, must be discussed and agreed upon by all parties involved before the start of the operation.
2. Master / Expedition Leader / Pilot in Command roles and responsibilities must be specified in the Operator's Company Helicopter Operations Manual, Helideck Facility Directory and SOPs.
3. The Helicopter Operational team must have received training from the helicopter crew prior to conducting operations with passengers. This training will include, at a minimum, shipboard helideck operations, ground and airborne helicopter safety procedures, passenger handling procedures, and emergency procedures.
4. All helicopter pilots must pass the IAATO Online Assessment for Expedition Guides.
5. Communications:
 - i. It is recommended pilots carry a marine band VHF radio in addition to their required radio equipment.
 - ii. All helicopter transponders must be turned on for T-CAS recognition.
 - a. All IAATO Operator helicopters should be registered with and participate in the COMNAP Asset Tracking System (CATS).
 - iii. The helicopter landing party will be equipped with a satellite phone.
 - iv. The helicopter landing party should be equipped with an Air band radio.

6. Prior to any passengers being lifted ashore, the Expedition Leader and/or other appropriate parties involved with the landing will conduct a reconnaissance flight.
 - i. During this flight, the landing conditions in the area must be assessed visually, and, where possible, through physical inspection.
 - ii. Considerations must be given to the proximity of wildlife and potential impacts for disturbance.
 - iii. From that observation, a decision will be made by the Expedition Leader, or an alternative suitable and experienced designated Helicopter Operations Leader, and the Pilot in Command as to whether a landing is possible.
 - iv. Shore landing equipment will be taken ashore when leaving person(s) at a location.
 - v. Suitable safety equipment will remain onboard the helicopter at all times.
 - vi. Review carefully any search and rescue plan if such an incident would occur based on each location of flying activities.



7. Scenic flight route planning should be done in collaboration with a member of the expedition team who is knowledgeable about local features and regulations.

If the vessel is stationary during scenic flights it is recommended that an expedition team member conduct a reconnaissance flight with the pilot to establish a preferred route. If the vessel is in transit during scenic flight operations, a knowledgeable member of the helicopter operation team should be on the bridge at all times to oversee flight paths and communicate any relevant observations and concerns to the pilot.

8. Before commencing landings involving passengers, the site should be prepared:
 - i. Preparation should include:
 - a. determining the helicopter landing point;
 - b. determining the unloading and loading routes;
 - c. determining the shore side muster point;
 - d. identifying and marking or restricting no walking areas in the descending or ascending flight paths;
 - e. identifying any wildlife in the general vicinity and alerting the pilots to it;
 - f. conducting a risk assessment of shoreside hazards (crevasses) or local weather conditions (fog bank) that may affect operations.
9. Destination Briefing:
 - i. Passengers should be briefed by a member of the expedition team on the particulars of each helicopter excursion.

Environment:

1. Helicopter operations will be carried out in accordance with the rules and regulations set forth in:
 - i. ATCM Resolution 2 (2004): Guidelines for the Operations of Aircraft Near Concentrations of Birds in Antarctica;
 - ii. the COMNAP Antarctic Flight Information Manual (AFIM);
 - iii. the ATCM Guidelines for the Operation of Aircraft in Antarctica and IAATO Advice on Wilderness Etiquette during vessel based helicopter Operations;
 - iv. the Wildlife Awareness Manual (WAM).
 - v. the IAATO Vessel Code of Conduct
 - vi. the IAATO Ship Scheduling Guidelines.
 - vii. the IAATO Biosecurity cleaning procedures
 - viii. Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) Non-Native Species Manual
 - ix. COMNAP Non-Native Species Checklist for Supply Managers, and
 - x. COMNAP Practical Training Module for Non-Native Species

Operators are responsible for ensuring all pilots, crew and staff involved in helicopter operations are fully versed with the above documents.

2. Key considerations from the above documents include but are not limited to:
 - i. The helicopter will not be flown in a manner which would unnecessarily disturb bird and seal concentrations in Antarctica.
 - ii. Should a disturbance to wildlife be noted, flight path/ landing will be changed as soon as it is safe for the pilot to do so.
 - iii. Pilots are to be aware that concentrations of birds are most often found in coastal areas.
 - iv. No over-flying at a height less than 610m (2000ft) above ground level with penguin, albatross, and other bird colonies.
 - v. Be aware when operating in inland areas, snow and Antarctic petrel colonies are frequently found on nunataks.
3. All refuse or waste generated during helicopter activities must be returned to the ship for proper disposal. A separate waste permit for helicopter operations may be required by an Operator's Competent Authority.
4. Helicopter operations must adhere to management plans of Antarctic Specially Managed Areas (ASMAs) and Antarctic Specially Protected Areas (ASPAs).
5. Activities must be planned to ensure safety and avoid disturbance to flora and fauna at all times.
6. Due to the unpredictability of icebergs, landing on icebergs is strongly discouraged.
7. Helicopter skids/wheels and interiors must be inspected and cleaned pre-deployment and again in between operations at different landing sites.

Etiquette:



1. Pilots, Expedition Leaders and vessel Masters recognize the desirability to keep helicopters out of sight and hearing range of all other vessels. Tools to consider using are, but not limited to:
 - i. AIS
 - ii. Radar
 - iii. RedPort
 - iv. IAATO Live Ship Scheduler
2. Helicopters will operate more than 5nm away from other vessels and booked/confirmed IAATO landing sites, including flight paths, unless a decreased distance is agreed upon by mutual consent.
 - i. Vessels in transit who enter an area where helicopter operations are underway, will communicate intentions to the vessel operating helicopters.
 - ii. The vessel involved in helicopter operations is not expected to cease operations once they are underway, if another vessel enters the area unexpectedly, but general etiquette and safety measures will be observed.
3. All vessels and bases in close proximity (within 5nm) to helicopter operations (whether Government, IAATO or other) will be notified of planned air operations.
 - i. The Operator who is running helicopter operations must issue a Securite call at the beginning of operations, stating the start and anticipated ending operation time.
 - ii. During Operations a Securite call must be made every 30 minutes.
 - iii. The Operator conducting helicopter operations must email all national Antarctic program bases within 5nm of operation.
4. Special consideration and communication must be given to areas with active runways, including but not limited to South Shetland Islands, Marguerite Bay, Snow Hill Island, and McMurdo Sound.
 - i. Operators should inform the appropriate National Antarctic Program and/or runway teams of operational plans at least 24 hours in advance.