

ERA25MA171

OPERATIONS

Group Chair's Factual Report - ATTACHMENT 8

BIRD MITIGATION SURVEY

December 2025

Helicopter Operator Survey

Bird Strike Mitigation for helicopter operators

Attempted to contact sixteen helicopter operators that operated tour, utility, offshore, pipeline and charter. 6 operators did not answer or respond, 2 operators did not wish to participate, and 2 were closed for the season. Of the sixteen, there were 6 successful contacts and phone conversations; The operations investigator explained the following:

- The purpose of the survey (Bird strike mitigation, policy, and procedures as it relates to their ops)
- Provided a brief description of the bird strike working groups & recommendations.
- The survey/call was voluntary, it was confidential and it would be brief in respect of their time.

1. Utility, pipeline, power grid, operations.

Location: Gettysburg, PA

Fleet: MD500

Bird Strike Guidance: Brief Discussion Items.

Strategy for Addressing Rotorcraft Bird Strike June 16, 2021

Rotorcraft Bird Strike Working group (ARAC) May 2019

NTSB Recommendations: A-10-136 through -147

And other Operational Preventive Measures.

Awareness of Guidance:

Are you aware of the bird strike working group and bird strike mitigation recommendations we discussed?

A: Unaware.

Bird Strike Data Collection:

Do you have procedures for collecting bird strike data? Do you submit a bird strike report?

A: No, mostly tribal knowledge. If there is a bird strike, we try to report it. I did it once and filled out and submitted the bird strike report.

Policies and Procedures:

Q: Does your company have procedures or policies regarding bird strike mitigation?

A: Don't believe so but will check the manuals.

Airspeed Practices:

Q: Does your company reduce airspeed when practical to limit bird strike possibility?

A: We reduce airspeed when practical. "We almost always fly below 80 kts unless the pilot is transitioning or flying cross country. We fly higher to avoid birds, but the nature of the business means we fly mostly down low and almost always in a hover."

Q: Does your company conduct training reminding flight crews that more than 3 out of 4 bird strikes (77%) occur during airspeeds greater than 80 knots?

A: No. Tribal knowledge.

Altitude Practices:

Q: Do you increase altitude as quickly as possible and practical, when allowed by other flight variables, and fly higher at night, when possible, since most bird strikes occur below 3,500 ft.

A: No formal procedure, but best practice is to fly above 1,500 ft during enroute.

Personal Protective Equipment:

Q: Does your company require PPE consisting of a helmet and visor, at least for the crew, when practical?

A: Yes. Mandatory helmet and boom mic.

Lighting:

Does your company use taxi and/or landing lights or pulse lighting when practical?

A: No. Only strobes but not the landing light.

Flight Manual Language:

Q: Does your flight or operations manual include bird strike caution language similar to the Rotorcraft Bird Strike Working Group recommendations we discussed?

A: Unsure but will check the manuals. Likely no.

2. Touring

Boston, MA

Fleet: R44, Bell 206

Bird Strike Guidance: Brief Discussion Items.

Strategy for Addressing Rotorcraft Bird Strike June 16, 2021

Rotorcraft Bird Strike Working group (ARAC) May 2019

NTSB Recommendations: A-10-136 through -147

And other Operational Preventive Measures.

Awareness of Guidance

Q: Are you aware of the bird strike working group and bird strike mitigation recommendations listed above or that we discussed?

A: Unaware.

Bird Strike Data Collection:

Q: Do you have procedures for collecting bird strike data? Do you submit a bird strike report?

A: Doesn't believe so.

Policies and Procedures:

Q: Does your company have procedures or policies regarding bird strike mitigation?

A: Unsure.

Airspeed Practices:

Q: Does your company reduce airspeed when practical to limit bird strike possibility?

A: Speed based on operations (passenger touring.)

Q: Does your company conduct training reminding flight crews that more than 3 out of 4 bird strikes (77%) occur during airspeeds greater than 80 knots?

A: About 70/80 kts. during tour and 90/95 kts. during transit.

Altitude Practices:

Q: Do your pilots increase altitude as quickly as possible and practical, when allowed by other flight variables, and fly higher at night? Where do you typically fly?

A: No. Most flying is done between 800/1,000 ft because we operate close to the BOS "bravo" airspace.

Personal Protective Equipment:

Q: Does your company require PPE consisting of a helmet and visor?

A: No.

Lighting:

Q: Does your company use taxi and/or landing lights or pulse lighting?

A: No.

Flight Manual Language:

Q: Does your flight or operations manual include bird strike caution language similar to the Rotorcraft Bird Strike Working Group recommendations that we briefly discussed?

A: No response/Will have to research.

3. Touring, Full service on demand charters and specialty.

New York, New York

Fleet: S-76, Bell 407 & 206

Bird Strike Guidance: Brief Discussion Items.

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Rotorcraft Bird Strike Working group (ARAC) May 2019

NTSB Recommendations: A-10-136 through -147

And other Operational Preventive Measures.

Awareness of Guidance:

Q: Are you aware of the bird strike working group and bird strike mitigation recommendations listed above or that we discussed?

A: Unaware. Vaguely recognizes the documents. They get their information from AOPA through VAI (Vertical Aviation International.) He mentioned that the problem in this business is that today's Chief Pilots and Director of Operations are not here long enough to research, receive and pass it on. The average pilot tenure is less than 15 months. High turnover. "I am vaguely familiar with the bird mitigation group."

Bird Strike Data Collection:

Q: Do you have procedures for collecting bird strike data? Do you submit a bird strike report?

A: They have an SMS and report every bird strike via the official form. It's documented in their manuals.

Policies and Procedures:

Q: Does your company have procedures or policies regarding bird strike mitigation?

A: Yes. They have a training program that discusses migratory patterns, time of year, general awareness, airspeeds and altitudes and they are working on their SMS to incorporate language.

Airspeed Practices:

Q: Does your company reduce airspeed when practical to limit bird strike possibility?

A: Speeds are typical for tour operations. 80/85 kts, but higher during transit.

Q: Does your company conduct training reminding flight crews that more than 3 out of 4 bird strikes (77%) occur during airspeeds greater than 80 knots?

A: Yes. About 70/80 during tour and 90/95 during transit. "All pilots are trained in this."

Altitude Practices:

Q: Do your pilots increase altitude as quickly as possible and practical, when allowed by other flight variables, and fly higher at night? Where do you typically fly?

A: "When we are doing charter or organ operations, we fly at 3,000 ft. But during tour ops, we are limited by the Bravo airspace."

Personal Protective Equipment

Q: Does your company require PPE consisting of a helmet and visor?

A: No.

Lighting:

Q: Does your company use taxi and/or landing lights or pulse lighting?

A: "Yes, we use Pulselite."

Flight Manual Language:

Q: Does your flight or operations manual include bird strike caution language similar to the Rotorcraft Bird Strike Working Group recommendations that we briefly discussed?

A: Yes, they have an accepted manual (Not the GOM) which discusses bird mitigation. "We are right there in bird strike alley, with lots of gulls." The operator had 3 bird strikes this past year. One went through the chin bubble and caused quite a bit of damage.

4. Touring

Grand Canyon, Arizona

Fleet: Airbus H130, Sikorsky S-76

Bird Strike Guidance: Brief Discussion Items.

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Rotorcraft Bird Strike Working group (ARAC) May 2019

NTSB Recommendations: A-10-136 through -147

And other Operational Preventive Measures.

Awareness of Guidance:

Q: Are you aware of the bird strike working group and bird strike mitigation recommendations listed above?

A: Unaware of the specifics of these items.

Bird Strike Data Collection:

Q: Do you have procedures for collecting bird strike data? Do you submit a bird strike report?

A: It's all tribal knowledge now but changing with the development of our SMS. Its internal reporting.

Policies and Procedures:

Does your company have procedures or policies regarding bird strike mitigation?

A: Nothing formally documented.

Airspeed Practices:

Q: Does your company reduce airspeed when practical to limit bird strike possibility?

A: No. We always operate at max continuous due to the distances involved. We watch out for birds and report back to the other helicopters during the operations.

Q: Does your company conduct training reminding flight crews that more than 3 out of 4 bird strikes (77%) occur during airspeeds greater than 80 knots?

A: Yes. They have CTS/AVSTAR initial training that discusses bird strikes and mitigation techniques. But it's all internal and nothing is formally documented in any manuals yet.

Altitude Practices:

Q: Do your pilots increase altitude as quickly as possible and practical, when allowed by other flight variables, and fly higher at night? Where do you typically fly?

A: Most operations occur at 3,000 msl (500–800 agl.)

Personal Protective Equipment:

Q: Does your company require PPE consisting of a helmet and visor?

A: Negative.

Lighting:

Q: Does your company use taxi and/or landing lights or pulse lighting?

A: Yes. They have had pulse lighting installed for 20 years and it has been excellent at preventing bird strikes.

Flight Manual Language:

Q: Does your flight or operations manual include bird strike caution language similar to the Rotorcraft Bird Strike Working Group recommendations that we briefly discussed?

A: Nothing formal but that will change when their SMS is fully developed and mature.

5. Touring and Full-service charter

New Orleans, Louisiana

Fleet: Robinson R-44

Bird Strike Guidance: Brief Discussion Items.

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Rotorcraft Bird Strike Working group (ARAC) May 2019
NTSB Recommendations: A-10-136 through -147
And other Operational Preventive Measures.

Awareness of Guidance:

Q: Are you aware of the bird strike working group and bird strike mitigation recommendations that we discussed?

A: Vaguely. Unaware of the specifics of these items.

Bird Strike Data Collection:

Q: Do you have procedures for collecting bird strike data? Do you submit a bird strike report?

A: Yes. They have a bird strike reporting system and documented procedures.

Policies and Procedures:

Q: Does your company have procedures or policies regarding bird strike mitigation?

A: Nothing formally documented.

Airspeed Practices:

Q: Does your company reduce airspeed when practical to limit bird strike possibility?

A: No but they are aware of areas of bird/nesting activity.

Q: Does your company conduct training reminding flight crews that more than 3 out of 4 bird strikes (77%) occur during airspeeds greater than 80 knots?

A: Not specific to the speeds, but they have a training program for pilots and birds are discussed.

Altitude Practices:

Q: Do you/operator increase altitude as quickly as possible and practical, when allowed by other flight variables, and fly higher at night? Where do you typically fly?

A: They operate at 1,000 feet most of the time.

Personal Protective Equipment:

Q: Does your company require PPE consisting of a helmet and visor?

A: Negative.

Lighting:

Q: Does your company use taxi and/or landing lights or pulse lighting?

A: Negative.

Flight Manual Language:

Q: Does your flight or operations manual include bird strike caution language similar to the Rotorcraft Bird Strike Working Group recommendations that we briefly discussed?

A: Nothing formal.

6. Touring

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
Robinson R-44,

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And other Operational Preventive Measures.

Awareness of Guidance:

Q: Are you aware of the bird strike working group and bird strike mitigation recommendations that we discussed?

A: Unaware.

Bird Strike Data Collection:

Q: Do you have procedures for collecting bird strike data? Do you submit a bird strike report?

A: They only report them to the air traffic controllers (ATC) in the "Charlie" airspace.

Policies and Procedures:

Q: Does your company have procedures or policies regarding bird strike mitigation?

A: No formal policy or procedures.

Airspeed Practices:

Q: Does your company reduce airspeed when practical to limit bird strike possibility?

A: During the day, there is no limitation. (105 kts) At night, they fly at 80 kts.

Q: Does your company conduct training reminding flight crews that more than 3 out of 4 bird strikes (77%) occur during airspeeds greater than 80 knots?

A: No.

Altitude Practices:

Do your pilots increase altitude as quickly as possible and practical, when allowed by other flight variables, and fly higher at night? Where do you typically fly?

A: No. They operate at 1,000 ft AGL. Most of the time.

Personal Protective Equipment:

Q: Does your company require PPE consisting of a helmet and visor?

A: No. It would make the passengers anxious, passengers if they did.

Lighting:

Q: Does your company use taxi and/or landing lights or pulse lighting?

A: No pulse light, but at night they use landing and strobes for general visibility.

Flight Manual Language:

Q: Does your flight or operations manual include bird strike caution language similar to the Rotorcraft Bird Strike Working Group recommendations that we briefly discussed?

A: No.