



Number 15a | 3 December 2007

URGENT Helicopter hover fill safety – Confirmed instances

For information

The State Aircraft Unit has been advised that instances of some dam owners deliberately erecting wires across dams and water points which prevent helicopter hover filling have been confirmed. See below for known location details.

Pilots and operational crew must continue to be extra vigilant when assessing a water point for hover fill operations.

Comments

SAU Operations Briefing Note 12 Water Replacement Guideline covers the process that pilots and other operational crew must take when collecting water for fire fighting operations. Government policy is clear that water will be replaced under specific circumstances.

SAU Operations Briefing Note 14 Elevated Wire Environment regarding flying in the wire environment is also a useful reference in this case.

In addition it is DSE and CFA policy that no helicopter will operate in tactical operations unless it is fitted with approved wire strike protection equipment. There are few exemptions to this policy. On occasion helicopters without this equipment will conduct VIP and transport operations under limited operational parameters. Agency personnel and operators need to be vigilant in ensuring that this policy is adhered to.

A key role of the Air Attack Supervisor is to assist the pilot with identification of suitable water points and to aid associated hazard identification. DSE and CFA policy requires that all firebombing operations are supervised by a qualified Air Attack Supervisor. - as per the Air Operations Manual. (The incident controller has limited scope to vary this requirement). DSE and CFA regions should plan for and be able to respond an Air Attack Supervisor to any firebombing operation.

For Action

1. Pilots and operational crew are to take note of the details of the following known instances.

**Erica Township 37° 58.6' S
146° 22.7' E**

2. Pilots and operational crew are advised to continue to take extra care in identification and selection of water points for hover filling operations.
3. Any instances of wires across dams/water points that create a safety hazard for hover filling should be reported to the incident team and the State Airdesk as soon as possible.

All personnel associated with aircraft operations are requested to take extra care this season and to resist the temptation to exceed normal operating parameters in what could be a very difficult period.

Contact for further info:

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