

A GUIDE TO HELICOPTER OPERATIONS FOR VESSELS
EFFECTING PILOT TRANSFERS BY HELICOPTER
IN THE
THE HYDROGRAPHERS PASSAGE



1. THE HELICOPTER OPERATION

1.1 HELICOPTER OPERATIONS GENERAL INFORMATION

The helicopter flies out from Mackay – distance to Blossom PBG is 115 nautical miles.

- At this distance, vessel cannot contact the Pilotage Providers, or the Mackay Helicopter Base by VHF.

The telephone numbers of the Helicopter Office are +61 7 437 279 861.

The helicopter office is manned during Office working hours on weekdays.

At other times the duty person has the phone –

- Outside of working hours we request the Master to only call when absolutely necessary.

Type of helicopters are used –

- Twin engine helicopters both day and night and in conditions of bad weather and/or poor visibility.

The flying time from the Mackay Helibase direct to the PBG varies between 45 and 90 minutes.

1.2 INITIAL COMMUNICATION WITH THE HELICOPTER

Please ensure that your vessel is keeping watch on

- VHF Channel 16
- VHF Channel 14 (the REEFVTS working channel in this area)
- The AIS is on and working properly from when you are 6 hours from the PBG.

The helicopter will call the vessel on VHF Ch 16 between 30 and 45 minutes prior landing.

- The helicopter will request the vessel to change to a working channel, most likely Channel 09.

This initial call is to establish contact with the vessel and at this time, the helicopter will ask

- What is the vessel's Course and Speed?
- What is the vessel's Bearing and Distance from the Blossom Bank PBG?
- What is the vessel's ETA to the Blossom Bank PBG?



With this information, the helicopter pilot will make a quick calculation and advise the vessel,

- the approximate ETA for landing.
- If there is more than one ship embarking and/or disembarking a pilot, the order in which he will land the helicopter – which ship will be first, which will be second etc.
- The helicopter may also ask what the weather conditions are in the area of the vessel.
- The helicopter will then advise the vessel to keep the vessel's fire and emergency parties ready prior to the helicopter's landing time, and may ask the vessel to turn ON all deck & accommodation lights.
- The helicopter will then advise the vessel to go back to Channel 16 and that the helicopter will call the vessel again 10-15 minutes prior to landing, on Ch 16.

1.3 REQUIRED ACTION BY VESSEL APPROACHING PBG / PREPARING FOR HELICOPTER LANDING

If the vessel is going to arrive at the PBG before the helicopter,

- Then the vessel is required to adjust its speed to arrive at the PBG at the same time as the helicopter.

Under no circumstances should the vessel cross the PBG, without the pilot on board,

- Unless directly instructed to do so by the helicopter pilot.

The vessel should not proceed SW off the PBG as there are many shallows there.

On many occasions the helicopter's arrival time will be early i.e. before the vessel's ETA at the PBG.

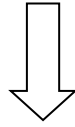
- In these cases, the helicopter will fly out beyond the PBG, to embark the pilot.
- In these cases, the vessel should continue to proceed towards the PBG at full voyage speed.

The helicopter does not require the vessel to slow down for landing.

When landing and taking off it is better for the helicopter, that the vessel is at best possible speed.

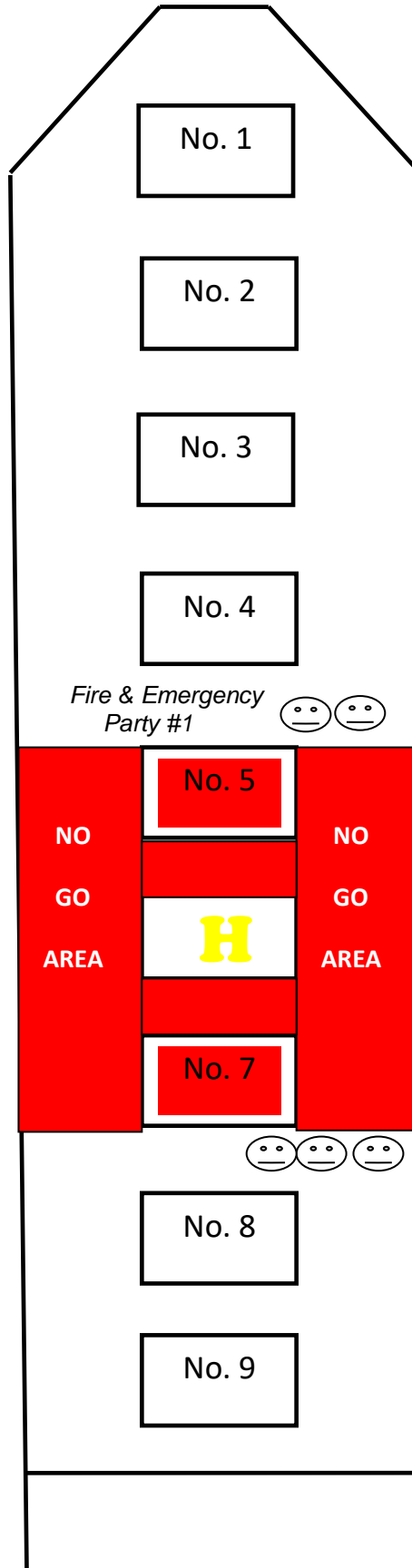
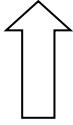


1.4 LANDING ZONE FOR HELICOPTER



Apparent Wind – South – 14 knots

Vessel steering North (000)
Speed 14 knots

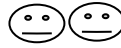


RELATIVE WIND:
"Wind STBD 45 degrees
AT 20 knots"

Picture 1: Approaching helicopter



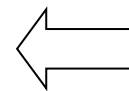
The helicopter will approach & land heading into the wind.



Fire & Emergency Party #1

NO
GO
AREA

NO
GO
AREA



True Wind – Easterly 14 knots



Fire & Emergency Party #2



1.5 INFORMATION EXCHANGE WITH THE HELICOPTER

10-15 minutes prior to landing, the helicopter will call on Channel 16 and then change to the working channel.

The pilot will then ask the vessel, a series of questions –

QUESTIONS & INSTRUCTIONS from the HELICOPTER	VESSEL'S RESPONSE	NOTES
A. What is the Course and Speed?		
B. What is the Vessel's Bearing and Distance from the PBG?		Blossom PBG marked on Chart AUS821 in Position: S 19 43.50 E 150 26.00
C. Is the vessel Rolling or Pitching?	<p>"No pitching or rolling" – <i>(If there is no pitching or rolling.)</i></p> <p>"Very slight pitching or rolling" – <i>(If there is very slight pitching or rolling)</i></p> <p>"No pitching, but rolling 2 degrees each side" <i>(If there is no pitching, but rolling is 2 degrees each side)</i></p> <p>"Vessel rolling 3 degrees & pitching 2 degrees" <i>(If the vessel is rolling & pitching to that extent)</i></p> <p>"No pitching, vessel rolling 5 degrees and more <i>(If that is the extent of the pitching and rolling)</i></p>	<p>The helicopter may advise the vessel to turn to a new heading to reduce the rolling and pitching</p> <p>Should the helicopter advise the vessel to turn to a new heading, - The vessel should do so only if it is safe to do so & not cause close quarter situations with other vessels</p> <p>The pilot will ask the vessel to call back when the vessel is on this new course. <i>(Should the vessel require to turn; most likely it would require the vessel to turn to a new heading of 270)</i></p>
D. Once the vessel has turned to the new heading, or if it was not required to turn at all, then "What is the RELATIVE Wind Direction & RELATIVE Wind Speed?" (The Helicopter requires the RELATIVE Wind Direction & Speed & NOT the True Wind direction & speed)	<p>When the vessel gives the RELATIVE wind direction, do so in degrees off the port or starboard bow –</p> <p>If the Relative wind is from 45 degrees on starboard bow, at 20 knots, <i>(As in the diagram, on Page 4)</i> say - "Relative Wind Starboard 45 degrees, at 20 knots"</p> <p>If the Relative wind is from 150 degrees on port bow, at 27 knots, then say "Relative Wind Port 150 degrees, at 27 knots"</p>	<p>For Wind Direction - Please do NOT say from NNE or SSE, or 6 points on starboard bow, For Wind Speed, Please do NOT say Wind Force 6,</p> <p><u>The helicopter pilot is not a mariner and does not use these terms</u></p>
E. What is the Hatch No. for Landing?		The v/l to also advise if there are any obstructions in the landing area greater than 20 cms in height.
F. "TURN ON (or OPEN) ALL DECK & ACCOMMODATION LIGHTS"	The vessel is required to switch ON all deck lights and all external accommodation lights	
G. "Are the Fire & Emergency Parties Ready with fire hoses charged and do we have the Master's Permission to Land?"	<p><i>The tail rotor of the helicopter which is almost invisible, is the most dangerous area –</i></p> <p><i>The fire & emergency parties should assemble at least one hatch length away from the helicopter landing hatch, well clear off the helicopter</i></p> <p><i>If the landing is on No.6 the parties should assemble, forward of No. 5 & aft of No.7, ideally on the windward side.</i></p> <p><i>(see Figure on Page 4)</i></p>	The Marine Pilot is quite capable of coming down from the hatch cover to the deck on his own and does NOT normally need assistance with his bag. <i>If he does signal for assistance, only ONE person must approach the landing hatch remaining within sight of the marine pilot at all times, and keeping well away from the helicopter, especially the tail rotor.</i>
H. The helicopter pilot will say, "Please stay on Ch 09 – The helicopter will land in xx minutes."	The ship should remain on Ch 09 & Ch 16 – the helicopter will take off, after the marine pilot disembarks, & the helicopter conducts a few safety checks, which may take a few minutes. Please do not change your course while the helicopter is sitting on your hatch cover.	After the helicopter flies away & is safe, the pilot will call the vessel on Ch 09 & say "Thank You for your assistance, pilot helicopter standing by Ch 16" – only then go back to VHF Ch 16 and Ch14.

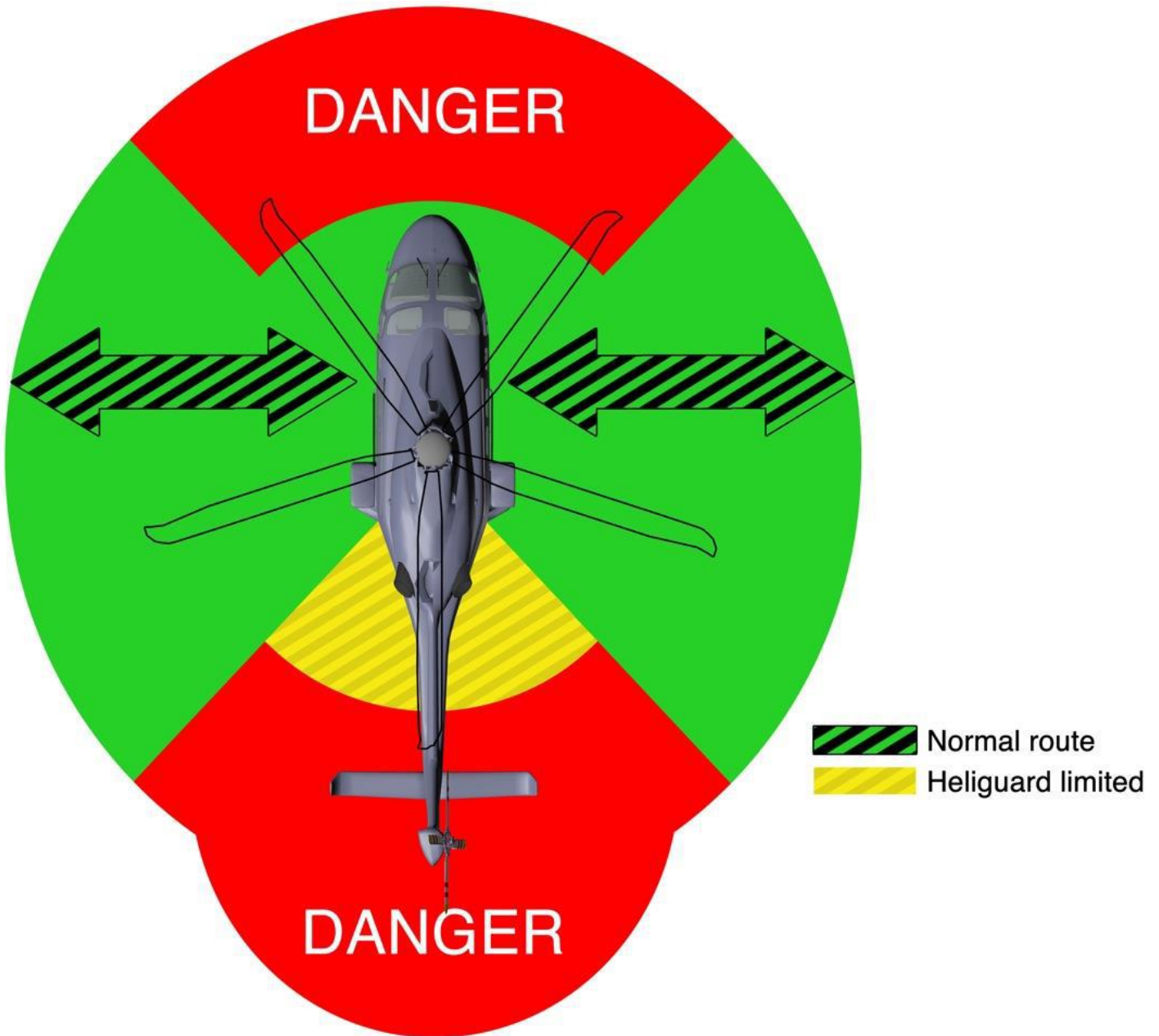
Occasionally, the helicopter may do an aerial circuit around the ship before landing, and this is quite normal –

It means the pilot wants to check the Relative Wind Direction & the amount of Pitch and Roll, before actually touching down.



1.6 DANGER AND CAUTION AREAS FOR APPROACHING HELICOPTER

Picture 2: Helicopter Danger Zones and Safe Embarkation Zones



(Courtesy – website of Norsk Olje og Gass – Norwegian Oil and Gas)

<http://www.norskoljeoggass.no/Global/Retningslinjer/Drift/LuftfartHelikopter/Helidekkmanual%20attachment%202011.pdf?epslanguage=no>