HSAC Recommended Practice (RP) # 2004-06

Helicopter Underwater Escape Training (HUET) and Helicopter Egress

Background

Some occupants of helicopters in Gulf of Mexico operations have experienced fatal injuries which may have been avoided had they completed Helicopter Underwater Escape Training (HUET) and Water Survival Training (WST). To enhance safety through standardization of HUET and WST in the offshore environment, the following is recommended.

Recommended Practices

1.0. Awareness and Responsibilities: Oil industry and helicopter operator staff should be familiar with the importance of HUET/WST and should establish training programs that embrace this RP.

2.0. Syllabus and Objective: Industry studies / test programs indicate that the aim of HUET should be to provide a level of competency such that trainees can "demonstrate the ability, underwater in an inverted HUET trainer, to release a representative seat restraint and escape release mechanism, and effect an escape unaided". Below is a sample training syllabus which may be used as a guide for evaluating or developing HUET / WST courses.

A. Lecture - Ground Session:

- Helicopter emergencies and evacuation procedures
- Use of onboard and other safety/survival equipment
- Preparation for impact - use of reference points
- Ditching hazards and proper egress procedures, including with reduced visibility

B. Pool Session: (It is recommended that the equipment used for this session be the same as that carried on the specific helicopter used by the operator)

- Surviving with and without benefit of any onboard equipment
- Progressive egress training from non-inverted to full inverted, with blocked and unblocked exit options, with varying visibility conditions

C. Lecture - Ground Session:

- Additional topics, review, and evaluation

3.0. Frequency of Training: Recommend helicopter operators schedule all initial new hire pilots and oil company / oil industry support companies schedule all other personnel who routinely fly offshore in the performance of their duties attend HUET training within the first 90 days of employment or sooner. Recurrent training should be conducted at intervals of no greater than five-years. It is also recommended that any person employed by the helicopter operator (technicians, fuel system maintenance personnel, etc) that are required to work in the offshore environment as a condition of employment attend this training.

4.0. Training Devices: The preferred training device is the Modular Egress Training Simulator (METS) or equivalent, which provides the ability to fit differing seating/exit configurations, variations in rollover scenarios, and offering the best realism in the escape scenarios. Other less sophisticated devices such as rollover chairs, etc. are available, but that training is generally accepted by the industry as being of less value than that provided by the METS facilities.

5.0. Egress: Operators are encouraged to seat passengers who have completed HUET/WST at the exit points. In order not to hinder occupant egress, passengers who may have difficulty operating exits or egressing the aircraft should be seated to the interior.

6.0. Training Sources: There are several organizations that provide quality HUET / WST in the Gulf of Mexico area. The current organizations providing this service are listed below:

A. University of Louisiana at Lafayette (UL) Marine Survival Training Center, Lafayette, LA (METS trainer)
B. Center for Marine Training and Safety (TX A&M), Galveston, TX (non METS trainer).