

Sumburgh Helicopter Accident Response (SHAR)

SHAR embraces the work being undertaken by Oil & Gas UK and Step Change in Safety in response to the tragic helicopter accident on Friday 23 August 2013



29 August 2013

This communication aims to provide a regular update from Oil & Gas UK and Step Change in Safety on the response to the helicopter incident on Friday 23 August, in which four people tragically lost their lives. Up to date information will also appear online [here](#).

Involvement in SHAR

SHAR embraces the work of [Oil & Gas UK](#) and [Step Change in Safety](#).

Book of Condolence

The UK Oil and Gas Chaplaincy has opened a book of condolence for all those who wish to pay tribute to the four offshore workers who lost their lives. It is available to sign in the Oil Chapel in the Kirk of St Nicholas Uniting, Union Street, Aberdeen between the hours of 10am and 4pm. Those not able to visit Aberdeen can also offer their comments [online](#).

Temporary suspension of some helicopters

On Saturday 24 August, Step Change in Safety's Helicopter Safety Steering Group (HSSG) met to discuss the helicopter accident. As there were no confirmed facts as to the causes of the accident, the HSSG, supported by the Step Change in Safety Leadership Team, took the precautionary measure of recommending temporary suspension of all commercial passenger flights of the AS332 L, L1, L2 and EC225 variant of helicopter to and from offshore oil and gas installations within the UK. There are significant technical differences between these variants; however, until more is understood about the cause of the accident, this cautious approach is appropriate. The suspension does not apply to the use of search and rescue helicopters for emergency response. The Oil & Gas UK meeting of 80 oil and gas operators and major contractors on Monday 26 August endorsed the HSSG's recommendation.

Length of temporary suspension

HSSG will closely monitor the situation and will only recommend resumption of flights by one or more variants when it considers that sufficient factual information is available to support the decision. The group met again on 28 August and that meeting will re-convene today, Thursday 29 August.

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Impact of temporary suspension for operations and offshore workers

The temporary suspension affects more than 50% of helicopters in the North Sea. The immediate knock-on effects of this are delays and flight backlogs with considerable inconvenience to the workforce and their families, and potential adverse effects on offshore activities eg. safety critical maintenance work. Individual operators have contingency plans in place for when flights are suspended due to bad weather for example, but preparing for a wider or potentially longer-term issue will require industry-wide collaboration.

Therefore, a meeting of 80 representatives from oil and gas operators and major contractors was held on Monday 26 August. It was decided that a consideration of the scale of the impact on the offshore workforce and operations in the short and longer term and what collaborative actions might be taken to minimise the disruption, should proceed under three task groups:

- Operations (details of first meeting below)
- Employee relations
- Security of energy supply

Operations Task Group

The first meeting of this group was held on Tuesday 27 August and the outcomes were as follows:

- The temporary suspension of some helicopters is affecting oil and gas operators to different degrees. Work by the task group is now underway to assess the breadth of the operational impact in more detail.
- In the short-term, those oil and gas operators that are less affected have been asked to consider sharing available helicopter seats while the task group gathers information and assesses longer term solutions. A number of companies are already sharing helicopter seats.

Forthcoming meetings

Thursday 29 August Helicopter Safety Steering Group (cont'd from 28 August)

Any questions?

Helicopter safety
Operational impact

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