

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Subject: Accident / Incident Investigation Support Request
To: Federal Aviation Administration, Accident Investigation Division

From: NTSB, Name and Office: Aviation Safety- Western Pacific Region

Request Number: 10-126 **Date:** 04-07-2010

Event: Regarding LAX08PA259; Carson Helicopters accident 08.05.2010

DESCRIPTION OF SUPPORT REQUESTED

1. Copies of two letters sent October 16, 2008, to Hillsboro, OR FSDO questioning the actions of Carson Helicopter Services Inc. (CHSI) and FAA responses to the two letters (Reference PTRS Record 200902015)
2. Documentation of compliance review/in-depth surveillance of CHSI performed in March 2009, including all correspondence between FAA and CHSI about the results of the surveillance (Reference PTRS Record 20091916).
3. All documentation from the Hillsboro, OR FSDO of the October 2008 inspections of weighing at CHSI (Reference PTRS Record 200809081).

Zoë Keliher / 208.352.0235

NTSB Contact / Telephone

FAA Coordinator/IIC: Tony James

----- For Federal Aviation Administration Use -----

Date Received _____ FAA Log Number _____

To: _____ Date Forwarded: _____

From: Manager, Accident Investigation Division

The above request has been received from the NTSB. Your support in providing the data not later than 15-working days or as soon as possible is appreciated. Please refer any questions on this matter to Ms. Kim Burtch at (202) 493-4812.

Date returned to Accident Investigation Division _____

Received by _____ on _____



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Flight Standards District Office
3180 NW 229th Avenue
Hillsboro, Oregon 97124
Phone: 503-615-3200
Fax: 503-615-3300
hank.baller@faa.gov

January 30, 2009

CERTIFIED MAIL RETURN RECEIPT/OR SPECIAL DELIVERY

Steve Metheny, Executive Vice President
Carson Helicopter Services, Incorporated
828 Brookside Boulevard
Grants Pass, Oregon 97526

Dear Mr. Metheny:

The purpose of this letter is to officially notify you of the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) plan to conduct a compliance audit of your company's operations under parts: 133, 135 and 137. The FAA derives authority to conduct this evaluation from Title 49 U.S. Code, Sections 44701, 44705, 44709 and Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 119.59. These statutes and regulations provide for comprehensive reexamination and inspection of airman, aircraft and various aspects of the air carrier certificate held by your company.

This type of audit is conducted in phases beginning with the assessment of design and oversight of programs and procedures. We estimate the first phase of the audit will begin with an in-brief on March 9, 2009 and conclude with an out-brief no later than March 20, 2009. The next phase will focus on performance and consists of direct observations of day-to-day operations.

The areas of consideration for this audit are: company manuals and other documents that define and control the operation, operational control, flight operations procedures, pilot training and checking, pilot records, continuous airworthiness maintenance program and aircraft configuration.

The primary objectives of this audit are to verify that Carson Helicopters Services, Incorporated (CHSI) is able to operate safely and in compliance with applicable requirements of 14 CFR, Parts 119, 133, 135 and 137. To meet these objectives, we shall work collaboratively with representatives of CHSI to methodically identify operational deficiencies and instances of non-compliance.

The audit will be conducted by specialists from our Flight Standards Division. Assigned principal inspectors will also participate. The project will be led by Mr. Ted Hutton of our Safety Evaluation and Analysis Branch. We trust that your Director of Operations, Chief Pilot and your Director of Maintenance will actively participate in the evaluation. Their

participation will expedite the process and give us a chance to work directly with management personnel required by 14 CFR, Part 119.

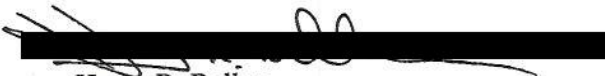
The process employed in this type of audit is one of demonstration of compliance by CHSI and verification by the FAA. You will find that this approach varies significantly from the traditional "discovery" method. We will address compliance one program or process at a time, discussing your operation in terms of methods and procedures employed by CHSI to ensure operational safety and regulatory compliance. It is important to note that this is a solution based process; if deficiencies are discovered we will discuss possible corrective action strategies to ensure a common understanding of the requirements.

Ultimately, a comprehensive report will be prepared by the FAA to provide CHSI with a detailed history of the audit and findings. If it is determined that your company operated in non-compliance with the applicable Code of Federal Regulations, appropriate action will be taken by this office.

As this type of audit can require the simultaneous participation of numerous pertinent CHSI personnel, various FAA inspectors, and the review of large quantities of documentation, we would ask that the facility to be used be of adequate size to accommodate all of these potential scenarios.

We appreciate your cooperation and invite questions or comments concerning the evaluation. Mr. Hutton can be reached via telephone at 425-227-1825 or by email at Ted.Hutton@FAA.GOV.

Sincerely,


Henry R. Baller

Manager, Portland Flight Standards District Office

Carson Helicopter Services, Inc. In-Depth Inspection Plan

Team Members:

- Team Lead – Bill McKibbon NM-09
- PMI – Erik Ramseyer NM-09
- APMI – Tom Leonetti NM-09
- PAI – Jarvis Cochran NM-09
- POI – Tim Moon NM-09
- APOI – Gary Burns NM-09
- Regional Specialist – Ted Hutton ANM-240
- Additional External Inspectors as needed - TBD

Initial Action Plan

Criteria to be used: FAA Order 8900.1, Volume 2, Chapter 4, and Volume 6, Chapter 2, Section 22, as well as applicable sections from 14 CFR Parts 43, 91, 133, 135.

To be conducted at Carson Helicopter Service, Inc. facility in Grants Pass, Oregon from March 10, 2009 through March 12, 2009.

Focus Areas for Operations: (Tim Moon and Gary Burns)

General Operations Manual (GOM)
Training program/manual
Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT) /security program
Flight-locating procedures
Weight and Balance procedures
Minimum Equipment List (MEL)

Focus Areas for Airworthiness/Avionics: (Erik Ramseyer and Jarvis Cochran)

General Maintenance Manual (GMM) to include Continuous airworthiness maintenance program/manuals (as applicable)
Minimum Equipment List (MEL)
Training program/manual
Weight and Balance procedures
Continuous analysis and surveillance system

Debrief of initial portion with operator at 1600 on March 12, 2009 prior to departing facility.

Follow-up Action Plan to be developed utilizing additional support (ANM-240 and External Inspectors, etc) as needed, based on findings from Initial plan.

Additional comments:

Tom Leonetti is to remain back in the office and available for research and support from the office.

Ted Hutton will be available to consult by phone as needed during the inspection.



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Flight Standards District Office
3180 NW 229th Avenue
Hillsboro, Oregon 97124
Phone: 503-615-3200
Fax: 503-615-3300

November 18, 2008

File Number: CNM0920090215

Mr. John C Coughlin
[REDACTED]

Central Point, OR 97502

Dear Mr. Coughlin:

This letter is in response to your complaint on October 16, 2008 regarding Carson Helicopter Services, Inc. and the accident involving N612AZ.

The items you mentioned in your letter of complaint have been investigated. Some were outside the FAA's scope of responsibility such as the Forest Service contract, but we were able to initiate up our chain of command, to question "Public Use" contracts and clarify the FAA's position. The probable cause of the accident as is a National Transportation Safety Board responsibility, and their investigation is not yet complete. The issue of the performance charts is under a separate investigation.

We have an ongoing investigation into the weight and balance issues and these matters remain open.

However, if you have any further information that would assist the FAA in pursuance of an action, please contact this Flight Standards District Office.

Thank you for your concern and cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Gary V Burns
Aviation Safety Inspector



U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Aviation
Administration

Flight Standards District Office
3180 NW 229th Avenue
Hillsboro, Oregon 97124
Phone: 503-615-3200
Fax: 503-615-3300

November 18, 2008

File Number: CNM0920090215

Mr. Gary M. Wiltrout

[REDACTED]
Boise, Idaho 83709

Dear Mr. Wiltrout:

This letter is in response to your complaint on October 16, 2008 regarding Carson Helicopter Services, Inc. and the accident involving N612AZ.

You mentioned many items in your letter of complaint and all that were in the FAA's scope of responsibility have been investigated. Some were outside the FAA's scope of responsibility such as the Forest Service contract, but as a result of your complaint, we were able to initiate and put forward questions on "Public Use" contracts and clarify the FAA's position. We cannot tell you the probable cause of the accident as that is a National Transportation Safety Board responsibility.

Questions concerning the chart issues are covered by other ongoing investigations.

The weight and balance issues also have a separate ongoing investigation.

On the remainder of your questions, we have found insufficient evidence to continue with the investigation, and we consider this matter closed.

However, if you have any further information that would assist the FAA in pursuance of an action, please contact this Flight Standards District Office.

Thank you for your concern and cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Gary V Burns
Aviation Safety Inspector

PROGRAM TRACKING AND REPORTING SUBSYSTEM DATA SHEET
(One PTRS Record Required for Each Unit of Work as defined in the PPM)

SECTION I - Transmittal

Inspector Name Code: GVB

Record ID: NM09200902015	Activity Number: 1737	FAR: 135		
NPG:	Status (POC): C	Callup Date: 11/20/2008		
Start Date: 10/20/2008	Results (ACEFISTX): C	Closed Date: 11/19/2008		
Designator: C4NA	Affiliated Designator:	OTNA:		
Aircraft Reg #:	Loc/Departure Point:	Loc/Arrival Point#:		
Flight #:	Complaint #: CNM09200902015	Occurrence #:		
Make-Model-Series:	Incident #:			
Simulator/Device ID:	EIR #:			
Non-Cert Activity Name/Company:	Accident #:			
Airman Cert #:	Name:			
Examiner Cert #:	Name:			
Applicant Cert #:	Name:			
Rec Instructor Cert #:	Name:			
Pass/Fail:	Exam Kind:	8430-13 #:		
Tracking:	Miscellaneous:	Numeric Misc.:		
Local Use:	Regional Use:	National Use:		
Activity Time:	Assessment: 0.0	Travel Cost:		
Triggers	Activity Number:	Repeat Number:	Geographic? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Foreign? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SECTION II - Personnel (unlimited)


Personnel Name	Position	Base	Remarks (23 Characters)
WILTROUT, GARY	PILOT		COMPLAINANT
COUGHLIN, JOHN	PILOT		COMPLAINANT

SECTION III - Equipment (unlimited)

Manufacturer	Model	Serial #	Remarks (23 Characters)

SECTION IV - COMMENT (unlimited)

Primary Area	Key Word	Opinion Code	Comment Text (unlimited length)
A	613	P	COMPLAINT ALLEGES THAT CARSON HELICOPTERS PROVIDED FRAUDULENT WEIGHT AND BALANCE INFORMATION TO OBTAIN A USES CONTRACT AND THAT DATA MAY HAVE EFFECTED FLIGHT SAFETY
			CARSON HELICOPTER SERVICES, INC. COMPLAINT
			16 OCTOBER 2008

Date: 11/12/2008
 Inspector Signature: 
 Originator: _____ Office: _____
 Supervisor Initials: _____

Section IV - Comment (cont'd)

Primary Area	Key Word	Opinion Code	Comment Text
A	613	P	<p>TWO LETTERS WERE RECEIVED QUESTIONING THE ACTIONS OF CARSON HELICOPTER SERVICES, INC. PRIOR TO THE MULTI-FATALITY ACCIDENT INVOLVING N612AZ. THE LETTERS WERE FROM TWO PILOTS, STILL CURRENT, IN THE SMALL SK-61 COMMUNITY. THEY SEEMED CONCERNED FOR THEIR FRIENDS WHO WORK AT CARSON.</p> <p>1. ONE OF THE QUESTIONS (SUMMARIZED FROM BOTH LETTERS) INVOLVED THE REPORTED WEIGHT OF THE AIRCRAFT ON THEIR RESPECTIVE FORM C'S. IT WAS ALLEGED THAT THE WEIGHTS WERE CONSISTENTLY UNDER REPORTED AND THIS DATA WAS ON THE FORM C'S WITH THE AIRCRAFT. FURTHER THAT THE FORM C'S DID NOT PROPERLY REFLECT ALL THE ITEMS INSTALLED. BECAUSE OF THE UNDER REPORTING THE COMPANY WOULD HAVE A BIDDING ADVANTAGE WITH THE US FOREST SERVICE. FURTHER THE CREWS WOULD BE MORE AT RISK BY HAVING INCORRECT WEIGHT AND BALANCE DATA TO BASE THEIR PERFORMANCE CALCULATIONS ON, MAKING IT MORE HAZARDOUS FOR THE CREWS</p> <p>ANSWER: MY FINDINGS WERE UNABLE TO SUPPORT A VIOLATION, AS IT APPEARS THAT THE WEIGHT AND BALANCE ERRORS WERE INADVERTENT. WHEN CARSON DEVELOPED THEIR "FIRE KING" TANK, THEY FIRST WEIGHED THE UNADORNED AIRCRAFT AND TANK SEPARATELY. THIS WAS A LESS SATISFACTORY SITUATION AS THE TANK WAS TO BE CONSIDERED A PART OF THE AIRCRAFT WHEN INSTALLED. THE TANK WHEN INSTALLED, INTERFERED WITH THE JACKS USED IN THE WEIGHING PROCESS, BUT IT WAS STILL DESIRABLE TO HAVE THE AIRCRAFT WEIGHED WITH THE TANK INSTALLED. AN ALTERNATE PROCESS WAS DEVELOPED INVOLVING SOME NEW "ROLL-ON" SCALES. THESE SCALES WERE NEW FROM THE FACTORY AND WERE CALIBRATED. DURING USE THE SCALES BECAME DAMAGED INTERNALLY (VERIFIED BY SCALE COMPANY) AND DEVIATED FROM THEIR PREVIOUS FACTORY CALIBRATION. THE COMPANY WAS NOT AWARE OF THE CALIBRATION PROBLEM UNTIL AFTER THE ACCIDENT.</p> <p>MANY DIFFERENT MECHANICS WERE INVOLVED IN THE WEIGHING OF THE FLEET USING THIS "LATEST AND GREATEST" SCALE SYSTEM. IF THEY NOTICED A DIFFERENCE IN WEIGHT THEY MIGHT HAVE RE-WEIGHED THE AIRCRAFT, BUT THE WEIGHING PROCESS CALLED FOR THE AIRCRAFT TO BE WEIGHED THREE TIMES AND THE RESULTS WERE CONSISTENT. IT WOULD BE MORE LIKELY THEY WOULD COMPARE THE WEIGHTS WITH OTHER AIRCRAFT RECENTLY WEIGHED AND IF THE NEW WEIGHT WAS IN LINE WITH THE OTHER AIRCRAFT, THE NEW LOWER WEIGHT WOULD BE EASIER TO ACCEPT. THIS MIGHT ACCOUNT FOR THE DISCREPANCIES AS THEY OCCURRED.</p> <p>IT CAME TO MIND THAT MANY OF THE AIRCRAFT WERE WEIGHED AT CARSON'S PERKASIE LOCATION, SO WHY WERE THEY OFF A SIMILAR AMOUNT? THE ANSWER WE RECEIVED WAS THAT THE PERKASIE'S SCALES WERE OUT OF CALIBRATION SO THEY HAD THE GRANTS PASS SCALES SENT TO THEM. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SAY OTHERWISE AND IT MAKES A PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION.</p> <p>THIS INVESTIGATION DID NOT FOCUS ON ALL THE DETAILS OF THE CARSON WEIGHT AND BALANCE PROGRAM SUCH AS THE ACTUAL CALIBRATION REPORTS FOR THE SCALES OR THE RESULTING CALCULATIONS IN PARTICULAR, BUT THE FORM C'S AND THEIR</p>

Section IV - Comment (cont'd)

Primary Area	Key Word	Opinion Code	Comment Text
A	613	P	<p>CONTENT WERE REVIEWED BY INSPECTORS WITH THE APPROPRIATE EXPERTISE AND OVERSIGHT FOR THIS AREA, WITH NO SIGNIFICANT DISCREPANCIES, BUT THIS REMAINS UNDER REVIEW BY THOSE INSPECTORS.</p> <p>ALL FLIGHTS, WITH MISCALCULATED WEIGHTS WERE AS PUBLIC USE OPERATIONS AND NOT UNDER PART 135.</p> <p>ALL IN ALL, THERE WERE PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR EVERY WEIGHT AND BALANCE QUESTION ASKED. FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION THIS MATTER IS CLOSED.</p> <p>2. BOTH LETTERS ASKED ABOUT UNFAIR OR UNLAWFUL BIDDING ON THE US FOREST SERVICE SOLICITATIONS FOR BIDS AND SUBSEQUENT AWARDED OF US GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS.</p> <p>ANSWER. NO VIOLATION SUPPORTED! COPIES OF THE CONTRACT DOCUMENTS WERE OBTAINED AND EXAMINED. IT WAS DETERMINED THAT THE FAA HAD NO SAFETY INVOLVEMENT IS SUBSTANTIATING ANY ASPECT OF THE BIDDING PROCESS. FURTHER THE FAA HAS NO REGULATION ASSOCIATED WITH THIS TYPE OF CONTRACTING.</p> <p>THE QUESTION THAT DID ARISE WAS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "PUBLIC USE" AND PART 135 OPERATIONS WITH RESPECT TO "OPERATIONAL CONTROL". THERE SEEMS TO BE MUCH CONFUSION WITH NOT ONLY CARSON, BUT VIRTUALLY ALL THE CONTRACTING OPERATORS. THIS IS UNDERGOING FURTHER SCRUTINY BY FAA MANAGEMENT.</p> <p>3. BOTH LETTERS ALSO REFERRED TO AIRCRAFT CHARTS AND WHETHER THE CORRECT ONES WERE USED.</p> <p>ANSWER. WITH RESPECT TO THE BIDDING ON THE CONTRACTS THERE IS NO VIOLATION. IT IS NOT THE FAA'S CONCERN ABOUT WHAT ANOTHER AGENCY ALLOWS WITHIN ITS CONTRACT BIDDING.</p> <p>NO VIOLATION COULD BE FOUND ON ACTUALLY USING THE INAPPROPRIATE CHART. THE USE OF THE CORRECT CHARTS WOULD BE A PROPER PART 135 QUESTION, BUT THE ACCIDENT AIRCRAFT HAS BEEN DECLARED "PUBLIC USE" BY FAA HEADQUARTERS.</p> <p>THE INAPPROPRIATE CHARTS MAY HAVE BEEN USED AS "MORE RESTRICTIVE". THIS WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED UNDER PART 135, YET MAY BE ALLOWED BY OTHER REGULATIONS.</p> <p>THE ACTUAL CHARTS IN USE BY THE ACCIDENT AIRCRAFT CANNOT BE VERIFIED.</p> <p>THIS ISSUE WAS DISCUSSED WITH THE OPERATOR TO INSURE PROPER USE OF APPROPRIATE CHARTS IN THE FUTURE.</p> <p>THERE IS AN ONGOING ENFORCEMENT INVESTIGATION OF THIS ISSUE BY ANOTHER INSPECTOR; THEREFORE FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION THIS</p>

Section IV - Comment (cont'd)

Primary Area	Key Word	Opinion Code	Comment Text
A	613	P	<p>MATTER IS CLOSED.</p> <p>4. ANOTHER QUESTION WAS ABOUT THE US FOREST SERVICE LOAD CALCULATION AND WHETHER IT WAS PROPERLY FILLED OUT.</p> <p>ANSWER. NO VIOLATION OF FAA REGULATIONS COULD BE VERIFIED. THIS IS A QUESTION THAT INTRUDES ON THE ONGOING NTSB/ US FOREST SERVICE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION AND IS NOT WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THIS COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION. THIS MATTER IS CLOSED.</p> <p>5. THE NEXT QUESTION ASKED ABOUT CREW TRAINING AND WHETHER IT WAS ADEQUATE.</p> <p>ANSWER. NO VIOLATION WAS FOUND. CARSON HAS AN APPROVED PART 135 TRAINING PROGRAM AND THEY HAVE A PART 91 GROUND TRAINING PROGRAM. BOTH PROGRAMS HAVE PREVIOUSLY BEEN MONITORED BY FAA INSPECTORS SEVERAL TIMES. WEIGHT AND BALANCE WAS A PART OF THAT TRAINING. BOTH PILOTS RECEIVED TRAINING UNDER THE 135 TRAINING PROGRAM. THIS MATTER IS CLOSED.</p> <p>6. A QUESTION WAS ASKED IF ALL REQUIRED MAINTENANCE WAS PERFORMED AND RECORDED.</p> <p>ANSWER. THIS MATTER WAS REVIEWED BY INSPECTORS WITH THE APPROPRIATE EXPERTISE AND OVERSIGHT FOR THIS AREA, WITH NO SIGNIFICANT DISCREPANCIES, BUT THIS MATTER REMAINS UNDER REVIEW BY THOSE INSPECTORS.</p> <p>7. WHAT WAS THE PROBABLE CAUSE OF THE ACCIDENT AND CORRECTIVE ACTIONS TO TAKE?</p> <p>ANSWER. THIS IS A JOINT NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD AND US FOREST SERVICE INVESTIGATION. THE NTSB MAKES THE DETERMINATION OF CAUSE IN ALL ACCIDENTS, NOT THE FAA; IN ADDITION THIS AIRCRAFT WAS PERFORMING PUBLIC USE OPERATIONS AT THE TIME OF THE ACCIDENT. THIS MATTER IS CLOSED.</p> <p>8. FINALLY THERE WAS A QUESTION CONCERNING A CARSON PRESS RELEASE.</p> <p>ANSWER. THERE IS NO VIOLATION. THE PRESS RELEASE DID TALK ABOUT ONE OF CARSON'S HELICOPTERS. IT MAY WELL HAVE BEEN THAT THE LETTER FROM THE US FOREST SERVICE ONLY MENTIONED ONE HELICOPTER SPECIFICALLY. IN ANY CASE THE FAA DOES NOT REGULATE PRESS RELEASES UNLESS THERE IS A VIOLATION PART 119.5, WHICH IS NOT THE CASE HERE. THIS MATTER IS CLOSED</p> <p>IN SUMMARY, NOT ALL OF THE QUESTIONS WERE ANSWERED BECAUSE OF OTHER ONGOING INVESTIGATIONS WHICH TAKE PRECEDENT. THE REMAINDER WERE INVESTIGATED, BUT EITHER NO VIOLATIONS WERE FOUND OR THE QUESTIONS WERE OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF</p>

Section IV - Comment (cont'd)

Primary Area	Key Word	Opinion Code	Comment Text
A	613	P	THE FAA'S REGULATIONS. GARY V BURNS AVIATION SAFETY INSPECTOR

Attn: Gary Burns, FAA, Hillsboro Oregon

16 October 2008

As a helicopter pilot with many hours of Sikorsky S-61 flying experience I am concerned about the Carson Helicopters accident this summer that was engaged doing contract work moving crews for the US Forest Service.

The areas that I am specifically concerned about are:

1. The correct weight of the aircraft that was involved in the accident. The weight and balance I believe did not correctly show items that were installed on the aircraft. Also, I believe the weight of the aircraft was known to be incorrect, but reflected not the correct weight, but the weight required to meet USFS performance criteria. The weight and balance information for this aircraft was required and submitted prior to contract award to the USFS. The USFS maintains a copy of all submitted aircraft information that was needed for contract award and subsequent aircraft carding.

After the Carson Helicopters helicopter crashed this summer, the USFS reweighted all of the Carson Helicopters on contract and found all but one to be grossly over the weight as indicated on the Chart C for each helicopter. The one that did meet weight was not owned by Carson Helicopters, but was leased and had been weighted by that company. To me this shows a trend of misconduct.

2. The performance chart that was used by Carson Helicopters to qualify for the contract was taken out of their Hoist Supplement. The aircraft that crashed did not have a hoist, or even the hoist provisions installed, which disqualifies it from using the Hoist Performance Charts.

The chart submitted to the USFS was not the same chart that is in the Carson Helicopter's Hoist Supplement. This means that it is possible that the crew of the accident helicopter used both incorrect weight and balance information knowingly provided by Carson Helicopters and an incorrect performance chart provided by Carson Helicopters to do their flight planning prior to the flight in which the accident occurred.

In conclusion, I feel this information deserves an investigation by the FAA to determine if Carson Helicopters knowingly misrepresented the weights of their helicopters and provided a bogus Performance Chart to their flight crews who would have unknowingly used these to plan the flight that ended in a crash that resulted in nine deaths.

Thank you,

John C Coughlin

Attn: Gary Burns, FAA, Hillsboro, Oregon

I am a typed SK 61 pilot with 10,000 hours logged in SK 61s. I have flown on fires for the Forest Service since 1971. I flew a Forest Service contract for four years such as the one Carson Helicopters entered into this year with the Forest Service. The helicopter accident, that claimed nine lives this summer, has many unanswered questions that that I am requesting the FAA to investigate.

Such Questions as:

Were the weights of the helicopters submitted by Carson Helicopters to the Forest Service correct? Did the chart C of the weight and balance, of the helicopters in question, reflect the equipment installed on the helicopters after the initial weigh in? Were the helicopters properly inspected by the Forest Service and the installed equipment listed on the equipment list and Chart C of the weight and balance record for each helicopter.

Were the correct performance charts and correct weight and balance figures used by the crew prior to the accident?

There is a USFS Load Calculation Form filled out by the flight crew every day prior to flight operations and is given to the Forest Service showing what the helicopters performance is for that day at the operational temperature and altitude. Did this form reflect the true weight and was the correct Performance Chart used by the flight crew prior to the accident? The surviving pilot should be able to answer these questions.

Were the crew properly trained and instructed on figuring the weight and balance as pertaining to the application the helicopters were used to perform?

Was all the maintenance performed and recorded as per the SK 61 maintenance manual.

What was the probable cause and what is needed to correct the problem if one is found?

Please refer to this link that is a response from Carson Helicopters indicating that only one of their fleet of helicopters was found to be overweight. In fact, only the leased helicopter from Haverfield Helicopters was found to be within weight and all of the remaining fleet was weighed and found to be grossly over the weights listed on their respective Chart C's.

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/state/20081016-1105-wst-carsonhelicopters.html>

Thank You,

Gary M. Wiltrout

[More California news](#)

Company says safety not issue in copter suspension

By Jeff Barnard
ASSOCIATED PRESS

11:05 a.m. October 16, 2008

GRANTS PASS, Ore. – The helicopter company involved in a crash that killed nine people fighting a California wildfire said Thursday the suspension of its firefighting contract by the U.S. Forest Service is about the weight of one of its aircraft, and not about safety.

“All our aircraft are FAA compliant and airworthy,” Andy Mills, director of helicopter operations for Merlin-based Carson Helicopters, told The Associated Press. “This is not a safety issue. It's a contract issue.”

Mills said the issue was the weight of one of the 10 helicopters Carson provides under contract with the Forest Service for fighting wildfires, and may be due to the calibration of the scales used to weight it.

Weighing more than is specified by the contract could affect a helicopter's lifting ability, and the Forest Service has the right to suspend the contract until the discrepancy is resolved, he said.

Seven firefighters for Grayback Forestry, a pilot for Carson and a U.S. Forest Service inspection pilot died Aug. 5 when their Sikorsky S-61N helicopter crashed on takeoff. It was ferrying the crew members from fire lines in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

The cause of the crash remains under investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board.

The Medford Mail Tribune reported the suspension followed a determination that the firm's 10 helicopters contracted to the agency did not meet contract requirements.

Susan Prentiss, branch chief for incident support contracting at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho, cited “a discrepancy in the weight,” but would not elaborate.

Prentiss said the suspension is not linked to the fatal crash.

Most of the 10 helicopters contracted to the Forest Service returned to Merlin, where Carson will weigh them and do routine maintenance, Mills said. Some had already been released from firefighting duty as the wildfire season winds down.

Find this article at:
<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/state/20081016-1105-wst-carsonhelicopters.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

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United States
Department of
Agriculture

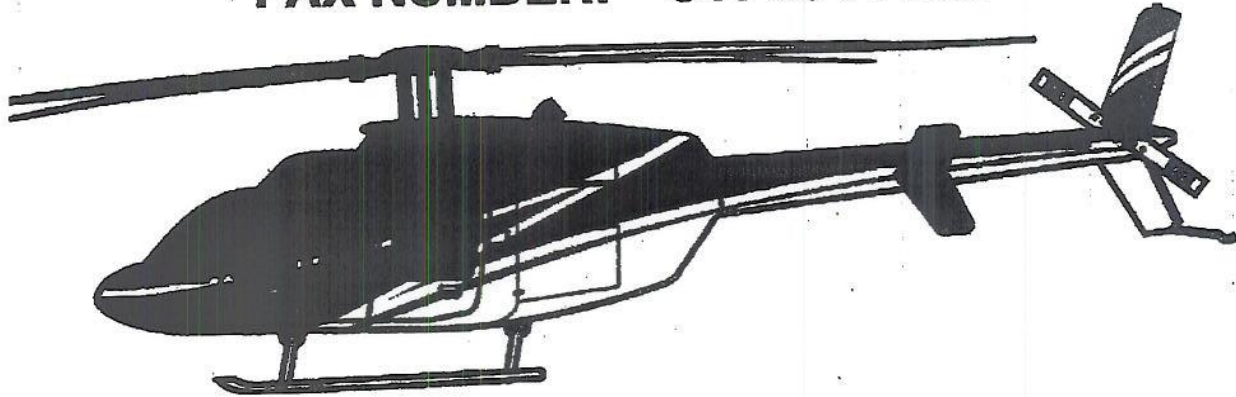
Forest Service

Regional
Aviation
Group

1740 SE Ochoco Way
Redmond, OR 97756
541 504 7200

PACIFIC NORTHWEST REGION

FAX NUMBER: 541 504 7258



Date: 10/03/2008
From: Robert "Kim" Reed; Aviation Operations Manager, R-6
Phone No: [REDACTED]
Attention: Tim Moon
Company: FAA – Portland FSDO
Subject: Aircraft N numbers and weight data
Receiving Fax No: [REDACTED]
Pages (inc. cover): 1 (one)

<u>N Number</u>	<u>Bid Weight</u>	<u>As weighed in RDM</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Part 135 Operations			
N 4503E	11,356	11,946	590
N 103WF	11,341	11,980	544
N 7011M	11,347	11,843	426
N 61NH	11,353	11,787	377
N 725JH	12,023	12,666	498
Part 133 Operations			
N 3173U	10,831	10,797	<34>
N 905AL	11,283	11,938	655
N 116AZ	11,023	11,198	175
N 612RM	11,026	11,084	58
N 410GH	11,526	12,181	655

PART	SUBPART	SECTION	SRR	PROCEDURES	GRND OPS	FLT OPS	FAA SPECIALTY	ORGANIZATION	PERSONNEL	TECH DATA	FAC & EQUIP	RECS & REPTS	TECH ADMIN	DEV	PLANNED	COMPLETED	APPROVE/ACCEPT	REVISION REQ'D	COMMENTS	
135	J	135.423	(a)																	*
135	J	135.423	(b)																	*
135	J	135.423	(c)																	*
135	J	135.425	(a)																	*
135	J	135.425	(b)																	
135	J	135.425	(c)																	
135	J	135.427	(a)																	*
135	J	135.427	(b)(1)																	*
135	J	135.427	(b)(2)																	*
135	J	135.427	(b)(3)																	*
135	J	135.427	(b)(4)																	*
135	J	135.427	(b)(5)																	*
135	J	135.427	(b)(6)																	*
135	J	135.427	(b)(7)																	*
135	J	135.427	(b)(8)																	*
135	J	135.427	(b)(9)																	*
135	J	135.429	(a)																	*
135	J	135.429	(b)																	*
135	J	135.429	(c)																	*
135	J	135.429	(d)(1) thru (5)																	*
135	J	135.429	(e)																	*
135	J	135.431	(a)																	?
135	J	135.431	(b)																	?
135	J	135.431	(c)																	?
135	J	135.433																		?
135	J	135.433																		
135	J	135.435	(a)																	*
135	J	135.437																		*
135	J	135.437	(a)																	*

How does CHSI show qualifications for all AMO that it utilizes? (including itself)

Change GMM, chapter 9-1 statement to "airworthy condition"

QA Manager is listed as QA Inspector on Org Chart.

Should RII team answer to DOM?

Include ICA info.

Revise work cards to include RII procedures.

Form 80-152 needs "RII" added to title.

What is Inspector Designer?

Recommend more explicit "buy back" procedures.

Recommend explicit procedures for acceptance & rejection of RII items.

Revise procedures to allow more calibration standards.

Enhance hand off procedures.

Found error in Chapter 11 structure. C4NA will resubmit manual at rev IR status.

PART	SUBPART	SECTION	SRR	PROCEDURES	GRND OPS	FLT OPS	FAA SPECIALTY	ORGANIZATION	PERSONNEL	TECH DATA	FAC & EQUIP	RECS & REPTS	TECH ADMIN	DEV	PLANNED	COMPLETED	APPROVE/ACCEPT	REVISION REQ'D	COMMENTS																
135	J	135.437	(b)																	*															
135	J	135.439	(a)	MAINTENANCE RECORDING REQUIREMENTS																															
135	J	135.439	(a)(1)																																
135	J	135.439	(a)(2)(i)																																
135	J	135.439	(a)(2)(ii)																																
135	J	135.439	(a)(2)(iii)																																
135	J	135.439	(a)(2)(iv)																																
135	J	135.439	(a)(2)(v)																																
135	J	135.439	(a)(2)(vi)																																
135	J	135.439	(b)(1)																																
135	J	135.439	(b)(2)																																
135	J	135.439	(b)(3)																																
135	J	135.443	AIRWORTHINESS RELEASE OR AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE LOG ENTRY																																
135	J	135.443	(a)(1)																																
135	J	135.443	(a)(2)																		*														
135	J	135.443	(b)(1)																		*														
135	J	135.443	(b)(2)(i)																		*														
135	J	135.443	(b)(2)(ii)																		*														
135	J	135.443	(b)(2)(iii)																		*														
135	J	135.443	(b)(2)(iv)																		*														
135	J	135.443	(b)(3)																		*														

Clarify instructions for issuance of airworthiness release.

Remove two year allowance.

Revise to include a requirement for completion of RTI.

**Interim Results of In-Depth Surveillance
of
Carson Helicopter Services, Inc.
04/10/2009**

On 3/10/2009 thru 3/12/2009, Inspectors from the Portland Flight Standards District Office (PDX FSDO) performed the first phase of an in-depth surveillance of Carson Helicopter Services, Inc. (CHSI) at their Main Base facility at Josephine County Airport in Merlin, Oregon. The purpose of this surveillance was to ensure that CHSI has processes and procedures in place necessary to continue operations as required by 14 CFR, Parts 119 and 135.

The cadre of Inspectors from the PDX FSDO consisted of Tim Moon (POI), Erik Ramseyer (PMI), Jarvis Cochran (PAI) and Gary Burns (APOI).

CHSI was represented by Sean Moretz (DO), John Harris (Chief Pilot), Levi Phillips (DOM) and John Robothan (Chief Inspector).

This surveillance was originally scheduled to be conducted in symphony with the ANM-230/240 branches of the Northwest Mountain Region.

Airworthiness Review

The primary Airworthiness/Avionics focus areas (listed below) for the in-depth surveillance were established by PDX FSDO management in coordination with management of the Northwest Mountain Region.

1. Continuous Airworthiness Maintenance Program (CAMP)
2. General Maintenance Manual (GMM)
3. Training Program
4. Continuous Analysis and Surveillance System (CASS)
5. Weight and Balance
6. Minimum Equipment List (MEL)

The Airworthiness/Avionics inspection team evaluated the assigned focus area processes and procedures for regulatory compliance, team findings follow:

	FAR	Comments
1.	135.425(b)	It was not clear in the GMM how CHSI will qualify any/all Aircraft Maintenance Organizations (AMO) that it utilizes.
2.	135.425(c)	GMM did not specifically require a statement of Airworthiness.
3.	135.427(a)	The Organization Chart does not agree with the Duties and Responsibilities section of the GMM (i.e. – Quality Manager v. Quality Inspector). It was unclear if the RII inspectors answered to the DOM or the Inspection Unit.
4.	135.427(b)(1)	GMM does not specifically address ICA's for maintenance associated with STC's, field approvals, etc.
5.	135.427(b)(3)	It was recommended that work cards include specific RII inspections on the card. Form 80-152 does not identify itself as a RII document.
6.	135.427(b)(4)	The GMM describes an Inspector Designee with no explanation of the position. It was recommended that "buy back" procedures be enhanced.
7.	135.427(b)(5)	It was recommended that more explicit instructions for acceptance and rejection of RII items and calibration standards be included in the GMM.
8.	135.427(b)(9)	It was recommended that maintenance "hand off" procedures be enhanced.
9.	135.431(a)	Found that GMM chapter 11 pagination structure was skewed.
10.	135.439(a)(1)	Recommended that instructions for Airworthiness Release be clarified.
11.	135.439(b)(2)	During a previous surveillance, it was discovered that a statement had been included which allowed for a maximum of two years for record retentions. The operator was instructed to remove the erroneous statement at that time. During this review, the statement was found to still be in the GMM.
12.	135.443(b)(2)(ii)	It was recommended that the Airworthiness Release include verification of completion of all RII items.

Operations Review

The primary Operations focus areas (listed below) for the in-depth surveillance were established by PDX FSDO management in coordination with management of the Northwest Mountain Region.

1. General Operations Manual (GOM)
2. Operations Specifications paragraph A008 and Operational Control
3. Training Program
4. Flight Crew Rest Requirements
5. Dispatch Procedures

The Operations inspection team evaluated the assigned focus area processes and procedures for regulatory compliance, team findings follow:

	Areas of Review	Comments
1.	Part 135.23	It was recommended that the makeup of the crew compliment be explained.
		It was recommended that secondary accident notification numbers of the NTSB and the FAA be added to manual.
		It was recommended that procedures be added to ensure confirmation of enroute qualification of flight crews in helicopters.
		* - It was discovered that the operations manual had erroneously been stamped as "FAA Approved" rather than "FAA Accepted". This was corrected on the spot by pen and ink change by Inspector Moon.
2.	OPSS paragraph A008	No significant issues were noted.
3.	Part 135; Subpart H	It was recommended that procedures should be added to better address the areas of aircraft and performance limitations.
4.	Part 135; Subpart F	No significant issues were noted.
5.	Part 135.63	CHSI has not accomplished any Part 135 flights in the last 90 days. A review of dispatch procedures indicated an acceptable knowledge of regulatory requirements.

Interim Conclusions

This initial phase of the in-depth surveillance will be complete when all proposed revisions to CHSI manuals and programs are accepted/approved. Following the completion of the initial phase the inspection team will conduct field and shop surveillance to determine if the Air Carrier's processes and procedures are effective in actual operations and are appropriately complied with.

Erik D. Ramseyer
Aviation Safety Inspector

Jarvis L. Cochran
Aviation Safety Inspector

Timothy D. Moon
Aviation Safety Inspector

04/10/2009