



Safety Alert No. 479

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## Lack of Adherence to Helideck Safety Procedures Results in Series of Near Miss Incidents



Figure 1: Offshore Helideck in Operation.



Figure 2: Stowable Handrail on Helideck.

The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) has observed a trend of safety incidents related to complacency and lack of compliance with established helideck safety policies and procedures. This pattern has given rise to near miss incidents, emphasizing the need for future continuous vigilance and strict adherence to safety protocols.

**The following incidents are examples of potential hazards associated with helideck operations:**

### **Incident 1 – Gas Venting During Helicopter Approach, 11/10/22:**

A hydrocarbon gas venting and flaring event occurred while a helicopter was making a final approach for landing. Because of effective communications and prompt actions, a potential serious aviation incident was averted. The incident underscores the importance of continuous situational awareness. Refer to BSEE [Safety Alert 311](#) ***Methane Venting Hazard to Helicopter Operations***.

### **Incident 2 – Foreign Object Debris (FOD) Left on Helideck, 01/24/23:**

A loose rope/FOD was left exposed on a helideck during aviation operations. The object created the potential for aviation safety incidents, trip and fall hazards, and marine debris.

**Incident 3 – Grease Slip Hazard on Helideck, 03/07/23:**

Grease left on the helideck following a maintenance procedure mixed with rain and immediately posed a slip, trip, and fall hazard. It also posed a landing hazard and caused confusion during aircraft inspections.

**Incident 4 – Unsafe Approach to Running Helicopter, 03/07/23:**

Personnel unsafely approached a running helicopter on an offshore helideck, which emphasizes the importance of adhering to safety protocols. For further details, see BSEE [Safety Alert 474](#) ***BSEE Issues Recommendations for Safely Approaching, Entering and Exiting a Helicopter on Offshore Helidecks.***

**Incident 5 – Crane Interference During Landing, 08/03/23:**

A helicopter was erroneously given a green deck clearance for landing despite the hazard posed by an improperly stowed crane interfering with the helicopter's safe approach.<sup>1</sup> The air crew recognized the safety hazard and effectively communicated with the operator, ensuring a safe landing. Because of effective communications and prompt actions, a potential serious aviation incident was averted.

**Incident 6 – Stowable Handrail Obstruction, 11/06/23:**

A helicopter was erroneously given a green deck clearance for landing despite the hazard posed by a stowable helideck handrail that had been left in the up position. The air crew recognized the hazard and promptly communicated with the ground crew to avoid the hazard. Because of effective communications and prompt actions, a potential serious aviation incident was averted.

**In light of the above incidents, BSEE recommends that operators and their contractors, where appropriate, consider the following:**

- Ensuring personnel are instructed and familiar with related policies and procedures to prevent incidents during helideck operations.
- Ensuring safety-critical operations are well planned, with the proper controls in place for flawless execution.
- Reviewing policy guidelines in the organizational Health, Safety and Environmental (HSE) manual, including area-specific regulatory requirements and recommended practices.
- Evaluating operations for signs of weakness or noncompliance, implementing specific actions to correct any identified issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Per 30 CFR 250.108, Cranes positioned in the proximity of Helidecks or Approach/Take-off Zones are not operated during helicopter operations in accordance with API RP 2D, Paragraph 3.1.5M.

- Developing and implementing facility-specific helicopter operations procedures to eliminate uncertainties and enhance safety protocols.
- Considering proper Helideck Management Principles for Pre-arrival Briefings and Toolbox Meetings.

**Additionally, BSEE encourages industry to review the following helpful information to minimize risks to passengers, helideck crews, and workers involved in offshore helideck operations:**

- [HSAC RP 163](#) *Inspection, Maintenance and Operation of Offshore Helidecks.*
- [HSAC RP 165](#) *Air Operator Guidelines for Offshore Helicopter Operations – 1st Edition.* See section 15. Passenger Control.
- [BSEE Safety Alert No. 322](#) / *Helideck Obstructions and Compounding Procedural Errors Contribute to Five Near Misses on OCS.*
- [NTL 2021-N03](#) – *Helideck Closures and Markings.*

– BSEE –

A **Safety Alert** is a tool used by BSEE to inform the offshore oil and gas industry of the circumstances surrounding a potential safety issue. It also contains recommendations that could assist avoiding potential incidents on the Outer Continental Shelf.

**Category:** Aviation