



Safety Alert No. 491
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BSEE Urges Increased Crane Safety Awareness During Offshore Helideck Operations



Figure 1. Offshore Helideck with Crane.

The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) recently investigated a near-miss incident that underscores the need for heightened crane safety awareness during helideck operations at offshore oil and gas facilities. This Safety Alert presents key lessons learned from the investigation and reinforces the critical importance of vigilance alongside strict adherence to safety protocols.

Incident Details:

On Sept. 16, 2024, a routine helicopter approach at an offshore facility nearly resulted in a serious accident due to a failure to follow proper helideck procedures. Before landing, the helicopter pilot visually confirmed that a nearby crane was securely stowed and stationary (Figure 1). However, as the helicopter neared the helideck, the crane operator unexpectedly raised the crane boom, bringing it alarmingly close to the landing area as the helicopter was 10 feet from touchdown. The pilots swiftly executed a go-around maneuver, successfully avoiding a collision and ensuring the safety of the crew and passengers onboard.

This incident underscores the importance of heightened awareness, communication, and coordination during simultaneous operations and the necessity of following established safety protocols. Strict compliance with safety measures during helideck operations is essential. Although the pilot's quick actions averted disaster, the incident reveals a lack of systemic communication and procedural enforcement that must be addressed.

Therefore, BSEE recommends that operators and their contractors, where appropriate, consider the following:

- Monitor for hazards, especially suspension of crane movements, during all phases of helicopter operations.
- Prepare to respond quickly to potential threats, allowing enough time and space to maneuver safely.
- Maintain open, ongoing communication with facility personnel to coordinate activities and mitigate risks.
- Encourage all crew members to speak up and verify critical information, such as crane operation suspension during helicopter operations, with key personnel (crane operator) to support safe operations.
- Conduct mandatory checks of helideck conditions and nearby operations before flight activity.
- Ensure clear communication channels for helideck status updates, keeping all personnel informed of simultaneous operations.
- Frequently reinforce helideck safety practices and hazard reduction techniques with employees to ensure compliance.
- Regularly train staff and contractors to identify and address helideck safety concerns.
- Conduct routine audits of helideck conditions and ensure operational protocols are up to date.

BSEE encourages all stakeholders to closely follow safety regulations and cultivate a culture of vigilance and communication. Implementing the recommended steps mentioned in this Safety Alert will reduce the likelihood of future occurrences while also improving the safety and integrity of offshore operations.

Additionally, BSEE reminds industry of the following information and aids to help reduce dangers to passengers, helideck crews, and anyone involved in offshore helideck operations:

- [HSAC RP 163](#) *Inspection, Maintenance and Operations of Offshore Helidecks*.
- [HSAC RP 165](#) *Air Operator Guidelines for Offshore Helicopter Operations – 1st Edition*.

- [BSEE Safety Alert No. 322](#) / *Helideck Obstructions and Compounding Procedural Errors Contribute to Five Near Misses on OCS.*
- [BSEE Safety Alert No. 479](#)/ *Lack of Adherence to Helideck Safety Procedures Results in Series of Near Miss Incidents for additional information.*
- BSEE Notice to Lessees (NTL), [NTL-2021-N03](#)/ *Helideck Closures and Markings.*
- [30 CFR 250.198\(e\)\(58\)](#) – API RP 2D, Operation and Maintenance of Offshore Cranes, Sixth Edition, May 2007; incorporated by reference at [30 CFR 250.108](#), Criteria for crane and other material-handling equipment. Note: BSEE Potential Incident of Non-Compliance (PINC) I-104, which reads, “*Are Cranes which are positioned in the proximity of the helidecks or approach/ take-off zones not operated during helicopter operations IAW API RP 2D, Para 3.1.5M?*”

– 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