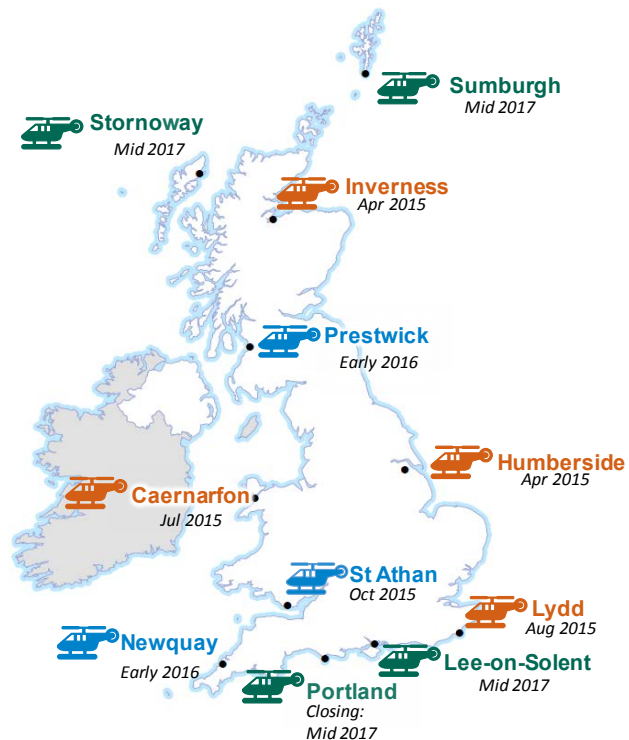# Department for Transport

Search and Rescue Helicopter Statistics - User Feedback

Historically, search and rescue helicopter (SARH) operations in the United Kingdom were managed by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA).

In April 2015, the operational phase of a **new contract to operate civilian SARH services in the UK, managed by the MCA** commenced. These new arrangements will take over from the current mixture of military and Coastguard SARH services.

Stornoway
Mid 2017

Sumburgh
Mid 2017

Inverness
Apr 2015

Prestwick
Early 2016

Humberside
Apr 2015

Caernarfon
Jul 2015

St Athan
Oct 2015

Lydd
Aug 2015

Newquay
Early 2016

Lee-on-Solent
Mid 2017

Portland
Closing: Mid 2017

■ **New Civilian base – Now open**   ■ **New Civilian base – To be opened**   ■ **Existing civilian base**

As part of the transition, a number of new SARH bases have opened, with two more scheduled to open in early 2016, and three of the four existing civilian Coastguard helicopter bases transitioning to the new contractual arrangements in 2017. The closure of existing military SARH bases is following the same timetable.

Statistics publications - past, present and future

Until the start of the new contract, the MOD was responsible for publishing statistics on SARH activity. During the transition period, the MOD has continued to produce monthly and annual statistical publications for those bases that remain open, until they cease operations.

The Department for Transport will now be taking over the production of statistics on SARH activity, covering the civilian bases, as and when they open. The first release, published alongside this document, is the first in this new series.

The first release provides background on the new and existing bases and key figures for April to September 2015.

Topics chosen for the publication are:

- **Number of taskings**
- **Taskings category**
- **Location of tasking**
- **Length of tasking**

Topics chosen for the publication were based on:

- Figures that were seen as **robust**, because data providers were able to check and verify them to a sufficient degree;
- **Key figures** that stood out; and,
- Topics that seemed **relevant to users**.

Ways of presenting the data

We are particularly keen to hear users' views on how we present the following aspects of the statistics.

Tasking category

Tasking category is a field (with five categories) that describes what happened on the tasking. The five categories are aggregated from a more detailed version with eighteen categories, and the eighteen originate from a free text description filled in by the helicopter operator.

The eighteen original categories and the five groups they were subsequently put into, along with explanations for why these groups were chosen, are given in Annex A.

Length of tasking

Length of tasking is presented as the total number of flying hours over the period. It was thought that publishing an average time would be less useful, as the duration of a tasking can vary widely.

An alternative way of presenting time spent in the air would be to look at a distribution of the different duration times for each base; for example, we could show that X taskings took less than half an hour, X taskings took between half an hour and an hour, etc.

Location

The publication looks at the location type (maritime, coast, land) and the exact location in latitude and longitude, as well as a breakdown by base. We would welcome views from users as to whether these are the best ways to present location for their uses.

Extra variables

Below is a list of variables that are available, but that were not included in the statistical release. We welcome users' views on how useful it would be if we included these in future, if we were able to verify that the data were of high enough quality.

Time of day

The time of the tasking is recorded, e.g. 18:34, and we could potentially add this to the release in one of the following ways

- Banded times (e.g. 6:00-9:00, 9:00-12:00, 12:00-15:00); or,

- Day / night.

Day of the week

As we have data on the date of the tasking, we could provide information on trends in which days of the week taskings are more likely to be required on.

Request for feedback

We would be grateful for any feedback, so that we can consider how the release can better meet user needs and how the dissemination of information can be improved.

You can provide feedback either by completing our short user feedback survey. Alternativey you can contact us by **email** to SARH.Stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk or **phone** 020 7944 4676.

We would particularly like views on:

1. What information from the publication do you intend to use?

2. What do you like about the topics covered and the way the statistics are presented?

3. What improvements would you like to see in the topics covered and the way the statistics are presented?

4. Would the quarterly release of the data be an appropriate frequency for your uses?

5. Is there anything else you would like this publication to include (regardless of whether, for example, data are actually available for this)?

6. Do you have any other comments, not covered by the questions above?

Comments are requested by **31 January 2016**.

Prior to publication, a number of potential users were identified and contacted. It is possible that many more potential users exist who are currently unaware of these new statistics. If readers are aware of anyone like this, please let us know.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information may be subject to publication or release to other parties or to disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes.[1]

What we will do with your comments

We will provide feedback on all of your comments in the next edition of Search and Rescue Helicopter Statistics, to be published in spring 2016, and clarify what we propose to do as a result of them.

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1   Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and Environmental Information Regulations 2004

Links

- The main statistical release for Q2 and Q3 2015 can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/search-and-rescue-helicopter-statistics-april-to-september-2015

- Alongside this publication a series of data tables have been published, where you can find the key statistics: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/search-and-rescue-helicopter

- The user feedback survey is found here: http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/search_and_rescue_helicopter_statistics/

- The Ministry of Defence have published statistics on military cilivian search and rescue helicopter activity. They will continue to publish statistics on military activity until February 2016. Their latest release can be found here : https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/military-search-and-rescue-quarterly-statistics-index

- Details of Ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-release-access-lists-for-maritime-and-shipping-series

- Eventually, the plan is to badge these statistics as National Statistics. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs: http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html

Tasking category

The eighteen original tasking categories and the five groups they were subsequently put into, along with explanations for why these groups were chosen, are given in the table below.

Detailed	Summary	Description
Rescue Search-rescue Medrescue Search-medrescue Recovery Search-recovery	Rescue / recovery	Taskings that result in a person being rescued or recovered. This includes taskings that result in persons being transferred to a medical facility for urgent medical care, any taskings where bodies of persons apparently dead are moved and any rescue that also involves some element of search. If a tasking starts out as a search but turns into a rescue or recovery, then it will be included here.
Search	Search only	Taskings where only a search was performed. The addition of the word "only" clarifies that a search may have been performed in one of the other categories (e.g. in search-rescue) but that this category specifies only those taskings where only a search was performed.
Assist Search-assist Top cover	Support	Taskings where the SARH gave assistance in some way, but where no rescue was performed. This includes assisting other SAR assets such as moving SAR personnel or equipment (e.g. mountain rescue teams, divers, pumps) and shepherding of aircraft, as well as on-scene assistance, e.g. communications relay, target identification and vectoring to target, for another rescue asset, or as cover for persons or vessels in distress that does not result in further intervention.
Med-transfer	Pre-arranged transfer	Any pre-arranged transfer of a person from one place to another; usually the transfer of patients or organs between medical establishments at the request of a recognised Medical Authority, i.e. NHS Trust, Hospital or Ambulance Authority.
False alarm Hoax Recalled Not required Aborted Search-aborted Precaution	Aborted / not required	All other incidents where, in the end, no SAR service was performed, either because the helicopter was recalled, the asset arrived on scene but no action was required, the call was a hoax or a false alarm or the tasking was terminated due to malfunction or bad weather. It also includes pre-positioning of a SAR helicopter to provide faster response to an anticipated or potential incident, e.g. in response to an aircraft declaring a "MAYDAY" or a potential incident on an offshore installation, etc.

The more detailed groups were not used for most of the publication because the numbers in many cases were very small, especially for the new bases that had only responded to a small number of taskings to date, and so any trends or patterns obtained from the data may be false.

There was also concern that, since the categories are derived from a free text field, the different options are open to interpretation and there is more likely to be error between the detailed groups than the five bigger categories where the distinction between each is clearer.

We welcome views from users on the groupings and the potential inclusion of sub-categories in some parts of the publication (for example, splitting Rescue/ recovery into "Rescue – without medical", "Rescue – with medical" and "Recovery").