

**Sikorsky S-92A,
G-MCGY**

**Derriford Hospital in
Plymouth, Devon**

04 March 2022

Accident

Investigation Synopsis

The helicopter, G-MCGY, was engaged on a Search and Rescue mission to extract a casualty near Tintagel, Cornwall and fly them to hospital for emergency treatment. The helicopter flew to Derriford Hospital (DH), Plymouth which has a Helicopter Landing Site (HLS) located in a secured area within one of its public car parks. During the approach and landing, several members of the public in the car park were subjected to high levels of downwash from the landing helicopter. One person suffered fatal injuries, and another was seriously injured.

Safety Recommendation 2023-028

Justification

CAP 1264 contains references to CAP 738. The CAP 738 introductory text indicates that the guidance is applicable to certificated and licensed aerodromes, but it also states that non-licensed aerodromes, heliports and HLS may find the information of assistance. The focus of CAP 738 is to ensure the continued safety of aircraft operating at the location. It states that a downwash zone should be agreed with helicopter operators, and that someone should be responsible for monitoring this zone to ensure it is kept free of persons, property, and parked vehicles as necessary. CAP 738 is available on the CAA's website but, like CAP 1264, it is unlikely that many hospital Trusts will be aware of its existence or that its contents could be relevant to the routine operations of their own HLS. It would be of benefit to hospital Trusts, or any other organisation that manages an HLS, to be able to find all the applicable downwash guidance in one document without the need to cross refer.

Therefore, the following safety recommendation was made:

Safety Recommendation 2023-028

It is recommended that the UK Civil Aviation Authority includes the appropriate downwash guidance relevant to hospital helicopter landing sites in one published document.

Date Safety Recommendation made: 30 October 2023

LATEST RESPONSE

Response received: 25 March 2024

CAP1264 Version 2 was published on 11 March 2024 with a new Section 2 – Heliport Operations, which now includes a consolidated chapter concerning the mitigation of helicopter downwash.

As such, the CAA consider that Recommendation 2023-28 is now closed.

Safety Recommendation Status **Closed**

AAIB Assessment

Adequate

Action Status

Planned Action Completed

RESPONSE HISTORY

Response received: 03 January 2024

The CAA accepts this recommendation and will be publishing (Q1 2024) consolidated downwash guidance within Version 2 of CAP1264 - Standards for Helicopter Landing Sites at Hospitals.

Workstreams:

1.) The benefit of consolidation of downwash guidance had been identified before the publication of the Derriford Report; the appropriate Policy Specialist has worked closely with Flight Operations to update CAP1264 to Version 2.

2.) In conjunction with Recommendation 2023-29 (below), work on Version 3 of CAP1264 has now started, with the aim of expanding it further to adequately cover both the Design and Operational aspects of HHLS. This is estimated to be ready for publication Q4 of 2024

AAIB Assessment – Adequate Open

Safety Recommendation 2023-029

Justification

For the HLS Site Keepers, performing adequate risk assessments is a task requiring specialist knowledge that is not readily available within the health service. Hospital HLS managers would benefit from enhanced guidance on how to risk assess their sites and the range of potential mitigations that might be used to reduce the risk of uninvolved persons being exposed to the hazards associated with HLS.

Therefore, the following safety recommendation was made:

Safety Recommendation 2023-029

It is recommended that the UK Civil Aviation Authority, in conjunction with the Onshore Safety Leadership Group and the relevant NHS organisations in the UK, develop and promulgate enhanced risk management guidance for hospital helicopter landing sites, and provide information on the range and use of potential mitigations for the protection of uninvolved persons from helicopter downwash.

Date Safety Recommendation made: 30 October 2023

LATEST RESPONSE

Response received: 30 April 2024

The Heliport Operations Manual

CAP1264 Version 3 was published on 29 April 2024 with the addition of Annex A – The Heliport Operations Manual (HOM).

The HOM was produced, with input from UK CAA SMEs, Onshore Safety Leadership Team (OnSLG) and Blue Light Air Safety Team (BLAST), to aid those NHS Trusts with responsibility for Hospital Helicopter Landing Sites (HHLS) in producing their own overarching HHLS reference document. It's aim was to provide guidance in all areas of HHLS operations and designed in the form of a 'template', thus allowing Trusts to incorporate their own exiting policies and share best practice. Modelled on a typical AOC holder's Operation's Manual, it covers the following sections, each with guidance and relevant links to other publications or UK regulation:

Part A: General

1. Administration and Control of Manual
2. Organisation and Responsibilities
3. Safety Management Systems
4. Qualification Requirements
5. Dangerous Goods
6. Handling and Notification of Accidents / Incidents

Part B: Site Specific Procedures

1. Normal HHLS Procedures
2. Emergency HHLS Procedures
3. HHLS Maintenance

Part C: Change Management

1. HHLS Change Notification
2. HHLS Safeguarding Procedures
3. HHS Operations Contact Details

Part D: Training

1. HHLS Awareness Courses
2. Training Records

The BLAST Landing Site Team (BLAST LST) has recently been stood up to provide a direct link between the Hospital Trusts, the work of OnSLG / BLAST and HEMS/SAR Operators. With CAP1264 v3 now published, BLAST LST will initially be working in conjunction with Derriford Hospital to populate and complete its own HOM. Advice and guidance from that process will be utilised by OnSLG to, where necessary, aid further NHS Trusts in completion of their own HOM.

Hospital Helipad – Aviation Awareness Course

The CAA International (CAAi) has designed and now successfully delivered a number of HHLS Awareness Courses, providing guidance and training to persons with responsibility for HHLS, including NHS Trust HHLS Accountable Managers and Responsible Persons (as designated in CAP1264). This course includes the following topics:

- Overview of UK Emergency Services Aviation
- Introduction to UK Aviation Regulation
- Principles of Rotary Flight
- Helicopter Operations
- Managing Emergencies
- Maintaining a Safe Operating Environment

Further details can be found here:

Hospital Helipad – Aviation Awareness | [CAA International.com](https://www.caa.co.uk/aviation-awareness)

With the above workstreams now complete, the CAA consider Recommendation 2023-29 now closed.

Safety Recommendation Status **Closed**

AAIB Assessment **Adequate**

Action Status **Planned Action Completed**

RESPONSE HISTORY

Response received: 03 January 2024

The CAA accepts this recommendation and has initiated the following workstreams:
Workstreams:

1.) The OnSLG HHLS Sub Committee met post publication of the Derriford Report and the Chair presented an Action Plan reporting to all of the AAIB's Recommendations. The OnSLG will continue to work closely with the CAA and NHS in order to ensure close cooperation across all workstreams.

2.) The stated tasks in Recommendation 2023-29 are 'to develop and promulgate enhanced risk management' and 'provide information on the range and use of potential mitigations'.

Both will be achieved by a number of coordinated workstreams, including:

a.) Version 3 of CAP1264 to include specific and detailed chapters on:

- Downwash
- Risk Assessments
- Heliport Operations Manual (HOM - see below)
- ACANS (see below)
- Case studies and examples.
- Templates for Standardisation

b.) The development of a Heliport Operations Manual. This will mirror the system used for a regulatory AOC Operations Manual suite as follows:

Section Titles

General

Part A

1. Administration and Control of Manual
2. Organisation and Responsibilities
3. Operational Control and Supervision
4. Safety Management
5. Compliance Monitoring
6. Qualification Requirements
7. Dangerous Goods
8. Security
9. Handling and Notification of Accidents / Incidents

Site Specific Procedures

Part B

1. Normal Procedures
2. Emergency Procedures
3. Minimum Equipment List
4. Helicopter Operating Procedures

Change Management

Part C

1. Heliport Change Notification
2. Heliport Safeguarding Procedures
3. Operator / Airdesk Contact Details

Training

Part D

1. Awareness Course Applicability
2. Management Course Applicability
3. Training Records

c.) The CAAi led 'Responsible Person HHLS Awareness Training Courses' are now being offered to all NHS Trusts and the initial uptake has been very positive, with courses fully booked into 2024.

Hospital Helipad – Aviation Awareness | Training Course by the UK CAA (caainternational.com)

d.) ACANS is currently used by all Blue Light Operators as an EFB mapping and information tool. Discussions with Airbox (developer of ACANS) indicate that a number of cross usage (Hospital and Operators) developmental safety features would be possible. These include:

- a. HHLS Warnings
- b. HHLS Incident Reporting
- c. HHLS 'Traffic Light' system
- d. Possible Webcam integration

AAIB Assessment – Adequate Open

Safety Recommendation 2023-030

Justification

There are currently no minimum competency requirements for those personnel who are responsible for managing hospital HLS. To manage the risks effectively, these personnel need to have the knowledge to understand the risks and to also have effective systems in place for the communication and management of safety risks that may be highlighted by other organisations.

Therefore, the following safety recommendation was made:

Safety Recommendation 2023-030

It is recommended that NHS England Estates, in conjunction with the Onshore Safety Leadership Group and the UK Civil Aviation Authority, develop competency requirements, and introduce training, for all hospital helicopter landing site managers that includes, as a minimum, a basic introduction to helicopter operations and safety management practices appropriate for such facilities.

NHS England Estates should seek participation from the healthcare organisations in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland to develop these competency requirements.

Date Safety Recommendation made: 30 October 2023

LATEST RESPONSE

Response received: 04 February 2024

Competency requirements and management systems will be outlined within the Helipad Operations Manual (HOM), the outline of which will be set out in the revised CAP 1264 guidance. Organisations will be required to adapt the HOM to their own specific site reflecting, for example, where their HHLS is located etc.

Awareness training for all NHS responsible persons will be provided by the CAA International (CAAI), though other training suppliers need to be encouraged as well. NHS organisations have started to attend these courses, and their usage will be reviewed as work in this area progresses.

Safety Recommendation Status Open

AAIB Assessment Adequate

Action Status Planned Action Ongoing Update Due 31 December 2024

Feedback rationale

The AAIB notes that, with the appropriate participants, work is underway to address the intent of Safety Recommendation 2023-030. The AAIB requests an update on the progress of this work by 31 December 2024. (EU Regulation 996/2010 article 18 refers).

RESPONSE HISTORY

N/A

Safety Recommendation 2023-031

Justification

There are approaching 200 hospital HLS in the UK, many of which were built prior to the publication of CAP 1264. The AAIB safety investigation did not conduct a survey of these other sites, and so is unable to judge any degree of compliance with the guidance that is provided in CAP 1264, CAP 738 and current ICAO documents. In the absence of knowledge of the guidance provided in CAP 1264, it is possible that a number of these other sites do not have adequate downwash zones, nor effective measures in place to manage public movements in such hazardous areas.

If downwash zones were implemented to the guidance in CAP 1264 and ICAO documents at all hospital HLS in the UK, the risk of injuries to uninvolved persons would be reduced.

Therefore, the following safety recommendation was made:

Safety Recommendation 2023-031

It is recommended that NHS England Estates review all existing hospital helicopter landing sites for which it has responsibility against the latest guidance and instigate appropriate actions to minimise the risk of injury from downwash to uninvolved persons.

Date Safety Recommendation made: 30 October 2023

LATEST RESPONSE

Response received: 04 February 2024

NHS England has carried out a one-off data collection to gain a comprehensive picture of HHLS in England. We will share the outcomes of the data with the OnSLG group and devolved nations to encourage a similar approach.

NHS England has updated its NHS Premises Assurance Model (NHS PAM) collection to include information on assurance of the management of HHLS across England.

NHS England will use these data collections to assess the level of compliance, and will re-do this once the new CAP guidance has been launched. An internal resilience group is being set up to monitor all high-risk estates related risks, e.g. reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC), oxygen, which is where we can take updates on this topic.

Safety Recommendation Status Open

AAIB Assessment Partially Adequate

Action Status Planned Action Ongoing Update Due 31 December 2024

Feedback rationale

The AAIB notes the work carried out to date on data collection and looks forward to receiving details of safety actions to address the intent of Safety Recommendation 2023-031.

The AAIB requests an update by 31 December 2024 on the progress made on reviewing the safety of the existing hospital helicopter landing sites in England for which NHS England has responsibility and on any consequential actions taken. (EU Regulation 996/2010 article 18 refers).

RESPONSE HISTORY

N/A

Safety Recommendation 2023-032

Justification

There are approaching 200 hospital HLS in the UK, many of which were built prior to the publication of CAP 1264. The AAIB safety investigation did not conduct a survey of these other sites, and so is unable to judge any degree of compliance with the guidance that is provided in CAP 1264, CAP 738 and current ICAO documents. In the absence of knowledge of the guidance provided in CAP 1264, it is possible that a number of these other sites do not have adequate downwash zones, nor effective measures in place to manage public movements in such hazardous areas.

If downwash zones were implemented to the guidance in CAP 1264 and ICAO documents at all hospital HLS in the UK, the risk of injuries to uninvolved persons would be reduced.

Therefore, the following safety recommendation was made:

Safety Recommendation 2023-032

It is recommended that NHS Wales Health Boards and Trusts review all existing hospital helicopter landing sites for which they have responsibility against the latest guidance and instigate appropriate actions to minimise the risk of injury from downwash to uninvolved persons.

Date Safety Recommendation made: 30 October 2023

LATEST RESPONSE

Response received: 19 December 2024

Further to your letter dated 29th April 2024 requesting an update on progress for the above, below is a summary detailing the actions taken in Wales so far:

- A Specialist Estates Service Notification (SESN 24-12) established a Task & Finish (T&F) Group comprising NHS Wales estate representatives responsible for Hospital Helicopter Landing Sites (HHLs) and external agencies who utilise aviation services, such as the Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust (WAST) and Welsh Blood Service (WBS). Monthly meetings address actions for HHLs compliance; Terms of reference (ToR) and meeting notes are available on request.
- An initial gap analysis identifying baseline requirements in association with CAP1264 v3 was produced, enabling a data gathering exercise for such things as confirmation of existing on and off site HHLs, Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs), training and investment. This also included a review of compliance with all relevant recommendations contained within the AAIB report; a copy of the gap analysis can also be made available on request.
- Cardiff & Vale University Health Board (CVUHB) conducted a best practice compliance review in association with CAP 1264, which has been shared with and is currently being adopted by the T&F Group to promote a consistent approach. The potential future mandatory requirements for elements of CAP 1264 may influence the final outcome.
- Attendance on the CAA Hospital Helipad - Aviation Awareness Course has been completed by 2 members of the T&F Group, with a recommendation for all Health boards to attend.
- Downwash risks have been identified at one major hospital site - Morriston Hospital; consultation with a structural engineer is ongoing to ascertain condition and status of the HLS and measures required to enable compliance with CAP 1264.

Proposed actions going forward:

- Confirmation there are no downwash risks at other I NHS Wales HHLs. No issues are expected other than at Morriston Hospital (see above).
- Submission of an interim report to Welsh Government by no later than 17th December 2024 to assist in ensuring that AAIB Safety Recommendation No 2023-032 is fully addressed.
- Consider and prepare for mandatory requirements of CAP 1264 as and when they are introduced. This may become apparent when version 4 is released.
- Continued engagement with the OnSLG and NHS colleagues across the UK to share best practice.
- Review the potential advisory role of the Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service (EMRTS Cymru), a collaboration between the Welsh Air Ambulance Charitable Trust and NHS Wales. EMRTS is unique to Wales with an untapped source of knowledge and experience that could be used to complement CAP 1264.
- Follow up on the Bristow 'withdrawal of service' letter (issued 23rd August 2024) and a further letter issued on 22nd November, requesting further information regarding SOPs, Helicopter Operating Manuals, accountable persons and training. Although the risk to Wales is seen as low to medium, Bristow remain an HHLs user at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor.

Whilst a significant amount of work has been completed to date in order to satisfy the AAIB recommendations, further work is required including additional issues identified beyond the AAIB recommendations. However, the primary focus of addressing the safety recommendations remains and we hope this update provides assurances of the steady progress being delivered in Wales.

Safety Recommendation Status

Open

AAIB Assessment

Adequate

Action Status

Planned Action Ongoing Update Due 31 July 2025

Feedback rationale

The AAIB notes the continued progress that NHS Wales has made in addressing this Safety Recommendation and requests a further update, in particular for the issues identified with Morriston Hospital, by 31 July 2025. (EU Regulation 996/2010 article 18 refers).

RESPONSE HISTORY

Response received: 28 March 2024

NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership Specialist Estates Services (NWSSP-SES) are advisors to the Welsh Government and Welsh Health Boards and Trusts supporting national policy development including monitoring issues that could affect the provision of a safe environment for staff, patients, and visitors. We will be coordinating the response of the NHS in Wales to the outcome of the Air Accident Investigation Branch (AAIB) investigation, following the tragic incident at Derriford Hospital in 2022. To this end we are now a member of the Onshore Safety Leadership Group (OnSLG) chaired by the National Grid on behalf of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and UK Department of Transport. We will be coordinating the response to the OnSLG's recommendations and associated workstreams on behalf of NHS Wales.

Since the AAIB report was published on 2nd November 2023, we have:

Circulated the report to all NHS organisations in Wales and reminded them of the requirements of CAP1264 (v1);

Undertaken an initial review of helicopter landing arrangements across Wales;

Facilitated access to the trauma receiving helicopter sites that has been noted by the OnSLG; and

Facilitated one meeting with one of our Health Boards as part of our commitment to raising the profile of the OnSLG.

NHS Wales is fully committed to supporting the work of the OnSLG and we would echo the content and sentiments of the related letter submitted by NHS England (dated 2nd February 2024).

Over the next 6 to 12 months, and aligned with the work plans of the OnSLG, we intend:

To establish a Hospital Helicopter and Landing Pads (HHLP) working group to raise the profile of helicopter operations.

Undertake a data collection exercise to establish compliance with CAP1264 (vs 2 & 3 when it is available).

Review Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) for all hospitals with helicopter landing facilities further to the AAIB's recommendations 2023-028 to 2023-036 and the OnSLG's workstreams, as appropriate.

Ensuring that the Estates and Facilities Performance Management System (EFPMS) that we manage on behalf of the Welsh Government is updated to include suitable key performance indicators (KPIs), which we anticipate will be aligned with the measures that NHS England will be incorporating into their Premises Assurance Model.

We intend to provide further feedback on progress through the OnSLG, but please advise if the AAIB require any additional assurances.

AAIB Assessment – Partially Adequate Open

Safety Recommendation 2023-033

Justification

There are approaching 200 hospital HLS in the UK, many of which were built prior to the publication of CAP 1264. The AAIB safety investigation did not conduct a survey of these other sites, and so is unable to judge any degree of compliance with the guidance that is provided in CAP 1264, CAP 738 and current ICAO documents. In the absence of knowledge of the guidance provided in CAP 1264, it is possible that a number of these other sites do not have adequate downwash zones, nor effective measures in place to manage public movements in such hazardous areas.

If downwash zones were implemented to the guidance in CAP 1264 and ICAO documents at all hospital HLS in the UK, the risk of injuries to uninvolved persons would be reduced.

Therefore, the following safety recommendation was made:

Safety Recommendation 2023-033

It is recommended that NHS Scotland Assure review all existing hospital helicopter landing sites for which it has responsibility against the latest guidance and instigate appropriate actions to minimise the risk of injury from downwash to uninvolved persons.

Date Safety Recommendation made: 30 October 2023

LATEST RESPONSE

Response received: 18 December 2024

In response to the recommendation set out within the report, NHS Scotland Assure set up a Short Life Working Group (SLWG) to agree a response to the above and work as a conduit for health boards who are responsible for the hospital helicopter landing sites (HHLS).

For clarity, NHS Scotland Assure has no direct responsibility for any HHLS. NHS Scotland is made up of 22 separate health boards, each of which are legally independent and responsible and accountable for their own infrastructure. The responsibility for HHLS therefore lies with individual health boards who exercise the function on behalf of Scottish Ministers.

To provide some background, health boards were made aware of the above incident at the NHS Scotland Scottish Property Advisory Group (SPAG) meeting on the 7th September 2023. A paper was provided by the Onshore Safety Action Leadership Group (OnSLG) outlining their approach to reviewing and standardising HHLS across the United Kingdom in response to the incident and the impending report.

NHS Scotland Assure were asked to join the group and provided representation. We also liaised with boards to identify pilot sites across Scotland. The OnSLG were to work with these boards to review the HHLS against current guidance, identify a Competent Manger (CM), organise training for the Competent Person (CP) and other relevant personnel, and devise a site-specific operations manual.

Two pilot sites were identified within NHS Scotland - Aberdeen Royal Infirmary in NHS Grampian and the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital (QEUH) in NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, with relevant contact details passed onto the OnSLG to progress.

There have been no meetings of the OnSLG since March 2024, and no progress with the pilot sites identified. We understand from the chair of the group that a meeting is expected early 2025.

In January 2024, the NHS Scotland Incident Reporting and Investigation Centre (IRIC) conducted a data sample request across NHS Scotland, in order for the SLWG to try to understand the risk profile of these sites. IRIC asked boards to provide details of reported incidents involving HHLS recorded on local risk management systems going back 15 years and to also conduct a specific search for downdraft incidents. 11 boards responded to the request, reporting 124 incidents in total. Initially, 9 downdraft incidents were reported which was corrected down to 7 (once duplicates were removed). 6 of the 7 were near misses and 1 resulted in minor injury.

On 7th March 2024, a further paper was presented to SPAG. The paper summarised the key points from the Derriford Hospital report, re-iterated the ask of providing information on downwash incidents, and asked for boards to provide an accurate list of HHLS sites across NHS Scotland. The list of sites would be used to provide information to the OnSLG who are trying to establish a list of sites across the UK.

As a follow up to the SPAG meeting, NHS Scotland Assure circulated a list of HHLS sites to boards (provided by the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS)) for boards to confirm the accuracy of the list. Responses were received however as there have been no meetings of the OnSLG, this information has not yet been shared.

Since February 2024 there have been several changes that have taken place within the HHLS sector. Namely, the update to CAP1264 and Bristow Search and Rescue (SAR) withdrawal of operational service from a list of twenty-three sites across NHS Scotland.

NHS Scotland Assure issued a letter from Bristow SAR (attached) directly to boards on the 2nd September 2024, making them aware of the withdrawal of service and asking all affected boards to contact Bristow SAR direct to progress matters as swiftly as possible. NHS Scotland Assure have been facilitating conversations between Bristow SAR and boards.

In addition to the communications described above, and the ongoing implications to health boards, the SLWG developed a Safety Action Notice (SAN), which was published and circulated to boards on 13th September 2024. The SAN outlined a number of recommendations for boards to take forward to ensure compliance with updated guidance and action to return Bristow SAR to operational use to the twenty-three sites outlined. A copy SAN404 can be found here.

To ensure continual awareness across boards, the issue was presented to the Scottish Government Capital Investment Network on the 10th November 2024, and again raised at SPAG on the 5th December 2024. We have also raised the issue at the NHS Scotland Property Transactions Group.

In November we received a request from SAS to circulate a letter which raised the importance of SAS engagement in clinical decision making around HHLS. The letter included relevant contact details for affected boards to contact them directly and was circulated to boards on 11th November 2024 (copy attached).

NHS Scotland Assure facilitated and hosted an Information Event on the 13th November 2024 which provided an overview of the SAN, input from Bristow SAR and Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS), information of available training through Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), NHS Highland provided an overview of the process they established during the review of the Raigmore HHLS and a forum for boards to share experiences.

Further to this, NHS Scotland Assure have facilitated meetings with relevant air operators (however Bristows SAR have recently stepped back from liaising with NHS Scotland as it is felt more appropriate for NHS Scotland to liaise with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency), stakeholders and boards to help prioritise and support boards (where possible) to bring their HHLS up to operational standards as soon as practicably possible.

I would like to reiterate that NHS Scotland Assure has been supporting this issue in a facilitative role only, ensuring that boards are provided a forum to discuss issues, to share relevant communications and contact details for relevant third parties. We are not tracking progress for each board's compliance with the CAP or details on where they are taking appropriate actions to minimise risk, this is a local board operational issue. Any further updates specific to this would require to be directed to respective health boards.

Safety Recommendation Status **Open**

AAIB Assessment **Partially Adequate**

Action Status **Planned Action Ongoing Update Due 31 July 2025**

Feedback rationale

The NHS Scotland Assure response indicates that some action has been taken to address the safety issues identified. In particular, the Search and Rescue operator has withdrawn approval to operate into 23 hospital HLS where it has identified that safety issues exist. However, an exhaustive review of compliance against CAP 1264 is yet to be completed for all types of helicopter operations into all hospital landing sites in Scotland. For this reason the response is assessed as 'Partially Adequate'.

The AAIB accepts that NHS Scotland Assure has been supporting the issue in a facilitative role as it has no direct responsibility for any hospital landing site as that lies with the 22 separate Health Boards that make up NHS Scotland. However, the AAIB requests that NHS Scotland Assure continue to act as a conduit and single point of contact for the purposes of reporting on the progress on each board's compliance with CAP 1264 and actions taken or to be taken. This is the same process being followed by the health services in England, Wales and Northern Ireland as it is impractical for the AAIB to liaise with each individual Board or Trust in the United Kingdom. To that end, the AAIB requests that NHS Scotland Assure provide a further update to the AAIB on the ongoing work by the 22 Scottish Health Boards by 31 July 2025. (EU Regulation 996/2010 article 18 refers).

RESPONSE HISTORY

Response received: 02 February 2024

In response to the recommendation set out within the report, NHSScotland Assure have been working to establish where the responsibility for helicopter landing sites lies across the NHSScotland estate, as this is information we do not currently hold centrally. We have also made all boards aware of the report recommendation, and a short life working group has been established to develop a plan on how to take this forward with the relevant boards.

In addition, our Incident Reporting and Investigation Centre (IRIC) have approached all boards to gather data on any incidents relating to the down wash from a helicopter landing at a site.

Please note that NHSScotland Assure is also a member of the Onshore Safety Leadership Group (OnSLG) working on the implementation of a national hospital helicopter landings sites (HLS) database and the creation of a training handbook. As part of the work of this group we have identified three of our boards to volunteer to take part in a pilot study.

AAIB Assessment – Partially Adequate Open

Safety Recommendation 2023-034

Justification

There are approaching 200 hospital HLS in the UK, many of which were built prior to the publication of CAP 1264. The AAIB safety investigation did not conduct a survey of these other sites, and so is unable to judge any degree of compliance with the guidance that is provided in CAP 1264, CAP 738 and current ICAO documents. In the absence of knowledge of the guidance provided in CAP 1264, it is possible that a number of these other sites do not have adequate downwash zones, nor effective measures in place to manage public movements in such hazardous areas.

If downwash zones were implemented to the guidance in CAP 1264 and ICAO documents at all hospital HLS in the UK, the risk of injuries to uninvolved persons would be reduced.

Therefore, the following safety recommendation was made:

Safety Recommendation 2023-034

It is recommended that the Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Trusts review all existing hospital helicopter landing sites for which they have responsibility against the latest guidance and instigate appropriate actions to minimise the risk of injury from downwash to uninvolved persons.

Date Safety Recommendation made: 30 October 2023

LATEST RESPONSE

Response received: 21 January 2025

Further to your letter, ref AAIB28045, requesting an update on the progress made in reviewing the safety of the existing hospital helicopter landing sites in Northern Ireland please see the current position at Annex 1.

The HSC Trusts are continuing to engage with the relevant helicopter operators that may have occasion to utilise their sites to ensure that the landing sites are safe for their operations. The current relevant operators are the Air Ambulance Service and the Search and Rescue Operator for HM Coastguard.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust – Rooftop Helicopter Landing Site at the Royal Victoria Hospital. Site is compliant with CAP 1264. The site has been deemed operational by the Air Ambulance Service in NI. The site is not currently operational for search and rescue operations while a review by the operator for HM Coastguard is undertaken.

Southern Health and Social Care Trust – Helicopter landing site at Craigavon Area Hospital. The Southern Trust has reviewed their site and developed a business case for required upgrade work to this helipad. The site is currently not operational for search and rescue or air ambulance operations.

Western Health and Social Care Trust – Helicopter landing sites at South-West Acute Hospital, Enniskillen and Altnagelvin Hospital, Londonderry. The Western Trust has reviewed the sites, and they are CAP 1264 compliant for the relevant design, operational and accountability structures. The sites are currently operational for the air ambulance operator however they are not operational for the search and rescue operator due to the physical constraints.

The Western Trust also has a landing site at Omagh Hospital and Primary care Complex . Operational manuals are in development for this site.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust – Helicopter landing sites at Causeway Hospital, Coleraine, and Antrim Area Hospital. Having reviewed the sites the Northern Trust is to install fencing around the sites to provide a 30m downwash secure zone. The Trust is developing the relevant operational procedures and accountability structures to fully comply with CAP1264. These sites are operational for the air ambulance operator.

These sites will not be operational for the search and rescue operator for HM Coastguard due to physical constraints.

Safety Recommendation Status **Open**

AAIB Assessment **Adequate**

Action Status **Planned Action Ongoing Update Due 31 July 2025**

Feedback rationale

The AAIB notes the continued progress that the Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Trusts has made in addressing this Safety Recommendation and requests a further update by 31 July 2025. (EU Regulation 996/2010 article 18 refers).

RESPONSE HISTORY

Response received: 30 January 2024

I am writing in response to the publication of the above report and the safety recommendation 2023-034 applicable to the Northern Ireland Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts . Please note that we have written to the HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland requesting that they review their current risk assessments for any Helicopter Landing Site (HLS) considering the latest version of CAP 1264 guidance and any relevant adverse incidents (Annex 1). If the design of any HLS is found to be noncompliant with the current guidance they have been requested to develop an action plan to mitigate any risk .

AAIB Assessment – Partially Adequate Open

Safety Recommendation 2023-035

Justification

Prior to this accident, progress had been slow with regular meetings not starting until mid-2022 and with a focus on a national database. A national database would avoid some duplication of work by operators and be highly beneficial for the industry to have a centralised database of HLS that is able to be updated quickly in an operational environment by helicopter operators and HLS Site Keepers.

An HLS database could, provided that everyone is able to openly share information, lead to better cooperation and communication between the HLS Site Keepers and the helicopter operators using them.

Therefore, the following safety recommendation was made:

Safety Recommendation 2023-035

It is recommended that the Onshore Safety Leadership Group (OnSLG), in conjunction with the UK Department for Transport, facilitate and support the development and introduction of a dedicated national hospital helicopter landing sites (HLS) database that can be updated in an operational environment by helicopter operators and hospital HLS Site Keepers.

In addition to helicopter operators and other stakeholders, the OnSLG should seek participation from the healthcare organisations in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Date Safety Recommendation made: 30 October 2023

LATEST RESPONSE

Response received: 01 February 2024

The OnSLG accepts this recommendation.

Work is currently underway to design and develop an appropriate tool to provide a national HLS database.

The ambition is that this system will allow near real time updates of operational information, which can be utilised by helicopter operators and HLS site keepers.

The healthcare organisations in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have been engaged and are participating.

Safety Recommendation Status Open

AAIB Assessment Adequate

Action Status Planned Action Ongoing Update Due 31 December 2024

Feedback rationale

The AAIB notes that, with the appropriate participants, work is underway to address the intent of Safety Recommendation 2023-035. The AAIB requests an update on the progress of this work by 31 December 2024. (EU Regulation 996/2010 article 18 refers).

RESPONSE HISTORY

N/A

Safety Recommendation 2023-036

Justification

Although there have been some steps towards addressing the issues raised in this report, progress could be accelerated if there was centralised leadership from an organisation in a position to secure resources and drive the improvements in safety required. There are a diverse range of stakeholders involved in the decisions around hospital HLS; business needs, local planning, design, risk assessment and ongoing risk management responsibilities are distributed over a number of government departments and current improvement efforts appear to be somewhat fragmented. Healthcare, emergency services and transport are all State functions in the UK, so it would be appropriate for a State organisation with the necessary expertise and channels of communication between other government departments to provide the necessary leadership. The DfT has such expertise and remit for aviation safety policy and therefore:

Therefore, the following safety recommendation was made:

Safety Recommendation 2023-036

It is recommended that the UK Department for Transport, in conjunction with the Onshore Safety Leadership Group, establish and lead a national initiative to improve the protection of uninvolved persons from helicopter operations at hospital helicopter landing sites (HLS).

This initiative should have sufficient authority, representation, resources, and expertise to ensure that coordination between the various risk owners and stakeholders is effective.

The various stakeholder roles and responsibilities (in particular those of HLS Site Keepers and helicopter operators) should be clear to all those involved, and the planning, design, and ongoing risk management of hospital HLS should be considered appropriately.

Date Safety Recommendation made: 30 October 2023

LATEST RESPONSE

Response received: 03 March 2024

The DfT accepts this recommendation, and will fulfil it through co-chairing a dedicated HHLS sub-committee of the Onshore Safety Leadership Group. This group will oversee work to improve safety across the network of hospital landing sites, including the development of an HLS database.

Members of this committee include the Department for Transport, UK Civil Aviation Authority, CAAi, the Health and Safety Executive, NHS England Estates, NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership, NHS Scotland Assure, Department of Health Northern Ireland, AAIB, BHA Emergency Services Committee, BLAST and Air Ambulances UK.

This approach, which is already underway, will avoid duplication, ensure sufficient authority, representation, resourcing and expertise, and ensure the recommendation is completed successfully.

Safety Recommendation Status **Closed**

AAIB Assessment

Adequate

Action Status

Planned Action Completed

RESPONSE HISTORY

N/A