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ROTARY WING NEWSLETTER

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SAFETYWIRE

FAA Easing Mental Health Barriers For Pilots

Source: AOPA.org May 18,2023; By Lillian Geil)

FAA Federal Air Surgeon Dr. Susan Northrup participates in a Meet the Administrator session during EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, July 29. Photo by David Tulis.

Federal Air Surgeon Dr. Susan Northrup aims to get pilots who are grounded because of mental health issues back in the air.

Northrup spoke about the FAA's intentions to ease aeromedical rules for mental health concerns at the Business Aviation Safety Summit on May 9, AIN reported.

She addressed concerns about pilot mental health and discussed upcoming revisions to certification procedures and rules from the FAA that will make it easier for pilots to regain their medical certificates and decrease wait times for pilots grounded for mental health issues.

Additionally, Northrup spoke about the success of the four selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor medications approved for pilot use in 2010 and announced plans to add seven more SSRIs to the approved list.

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Northrup, a private pilot and retired U.S. Air Force colonel, has been focused on addressing mental health issues within the FAA since her 2021 appointment as the most senior medical certification official . In 2022, Northrup participated in an AOPA roundtable discussion on pilot mental health at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, where she said, "Mental health conditions remain high on my list of things we need to address within the FAA," emphasizing her focus on early intervention and the importance of changing the aviation culture around mental health issues.

A 2022 study published in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine found that 56.1 percent of pilots reported a history of health care avoidant behavior related to fear of losing their aeromedical certificate, and nearly 27 percent indicated misrepresenting or withholding information on their aeromedical screening for the same reason.

Northrup's address at the Business Aviation Safety Summit, organized by the Flight Safety Foundation and National Business Aviation Association and held during Mental Health Awareness Month, also discussed the volume of pilots whose applications have a mental health component, aiming to "dispel the myths" about certification qualification so barriers to treatment can be destroyed, AIN reported.

Currently, 30 to 40 percent of applicants reviewed by the FAA have a mental health component, yet only 0.1 to 0.2 percent are denied certification or recertification.

However, AOPA recognizes the need for the FAA to provide transparent, repeatable, and logical decision paths for applicants to count on when self-identifying mental health issues.

AOPA, NBAA, and several pilot unions including the Air Line Pilots Association, Allied Pilots Association, NetJets Association of Jet Aircraft Pilots, and Southwest Airlines Pilots Association are pursuing legislation to help address needed and long-overdue reforms to the FAA's medical practices and protocols. In the meantime, AOPA strongly supports the need for pilots to get the help they need, and will continue to report on advancements in FAA policies around mental health and provide resources for pilots. In addition, we encourage AOPA members to call our Pilot Information Center at 800-872-2672 for help in addressing these and other issues.

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your freedom to fly

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Risks associated with transporting light load without sling highlighted in 2021 helicopter accident near Les Escoumins

HELICOPTERS

Source: January 11, 2023 By Helicopters Staff

Photo of the wreckage, with inset image showing a magnified view of the damage to the tail (Photo: TSB, Sûreté du Québec)

The Transportation Safety Board of Canada on January 10 released its investigation report into a 2021 accident involving an Airbus AS350 B2 helicopter registered to Héli-Express Inc. near Les Escoumins, Quebec. The investigation (A21Q0024) determined that financial and time pressures interfered with proper operational planning, risk management, and risk mitigation efforts.

On May 11, 2021, two Héli-Express helicopters were scheduled to carry workers and equipment to a work area at a Hydro-Québec transmission line near Les Escoumins. The Transportation Safety Board (TSB) explains the occurrence pilot was notified that a work platform was ready to be transported from the staging area to the team waiting for it.

Shortly after taking off with the platform hanging directly from the cargo hook mounted on the belly of the helicopter, TSB explains the pilot was notified that it was swinging, as had happened on previous flights. The pilot heard a loud noise and released the platform, according to the TSB report, with the pilot subsequently experiencing great difficulty controlling the helicopter's descent as it landed hard in an upright position on rugged terrain. The pilot was taken to a hospital with serious injuries.

The TSB investigation found that the pilot expected the platform to stabilize as the helicopter accelerated, but it continued to oscillate and struck the tail boom. Analyses by TSB showed that one of the tail rotor blades came into contact with the platform immediately after it was released, tearing out the tail rotor and gearbox in flight without the pilot's knowledge, and resulting in a yaw (turn) to the left.

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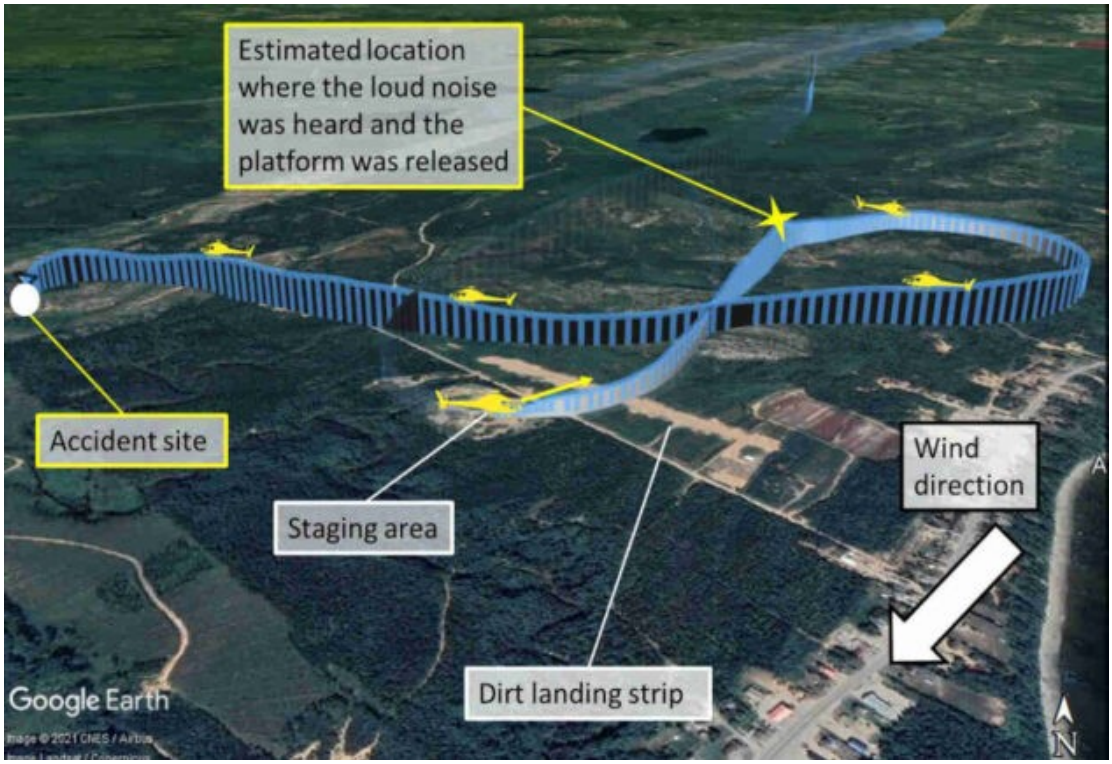

Map showing the occurrence helicopter's track based on data from the GPS (Image: Google Earth, with TSB annotations)

The pilot attempted to reduce speed and descend as low as possible, explains TSB, before shutting off the engine to stop the turn. TSB explains when the power was cut, however, the helicopter was likely at a height that could not sufficiently dampen the unpowered descent, resulting in substantial damage to the helicopter and injuries to the pilot during the hard landing.

In its report, TSB states the fixed deadlines at the work site and the potential contractual consequences of not meeting them put time pressure on the site workers and indirectly on the pilots. To save time, TSB notes the pilots opted to transport some external loads without a sling. TSB concludes that given that the risks associated with transporting a light load without a sling were not fully understood by the pilots and the operations manager, and given that no concerns were raised, the pilot concluded that the platform could be safely carried horizontally without a sling.

Following the occurrence, TSB explains Hydro-Québec hired aviation safety advisors with valid helicopter licenses to review all charters before awarding them to air operators. To further ensure safety, Hydro-Québec added a training course for suppliers that covers essential elements for working with the utility provider, including sling operations. The company also introduced site visits and surprise audits, explains TSB, to ensure pilots have the necessary tools to perform their work and that employees are aware of safety standards when working near a helicopter.

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Rotorcraft Accident Dashboard FY23 October-May

Summary by Rhodri Norton-Quick

Every so often we like to publish the FAA's Rotorcraft accident dashboard so you can keep an eye on the industry trends. Often times, we become so focused on the task at hand we miss the opportunity to zoom out and see how we're all doing as a whole. We've published nearly the complete dashboard for you, the only items omitted in this copy are the "Accidents by Make and Model". As we have a large number of varied operations, there is a limit to what we can accurately capture here.

When I first started posting these, the trend was increasingly dire. Even through Covid, when you compared it to our fixed wing brethren the data was astounding. I have good news for you all though. We're headed in the right direction. I will attempt to capture the cliff notes here, and highlight what they mean.

It's important to understand that the data encompassed here is from October-May of the current year, primarily compared to last year, and an average of the last 5 years.

- October to May of 2023 saw **56 total accidents**, this was a **decrease of 22%** versus the last year.
- Fatal accidents were down **33%** for the same period last year
- The accident rate per 100,000 hours is still alarmingly high at an average of **3.17** per 100 thousand hours; however, this indicated a **decrease of 23%** from the same period of time last year.
- **1.25**, that's the fatality rate per 100,000 hours. It's **down 16%** versus the same period over last year, and **down 26%** versus the average of the last five years. That's the good news but lets not discount that this means for every 100,000 hours the industry has flown we've lost at least one aviator.
- The sector with the **most accidents is Flight training,** which is to be expected.
- Of the **10 fatal accidents** so far this year, **40%** of them were Personal or Private flying. **Offshore and Air ambulance lead the public sector at 20% a piece**.

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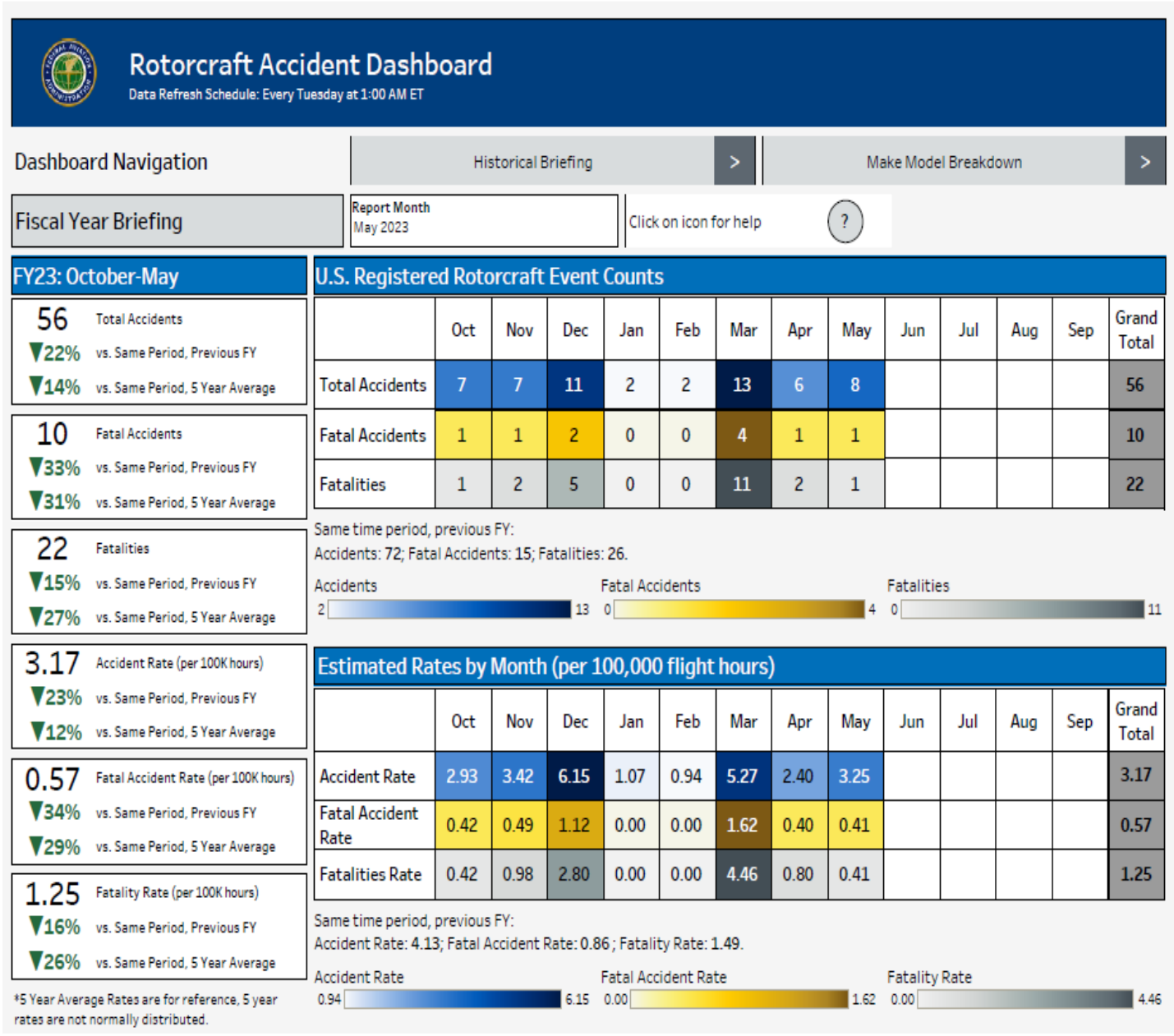
This is the final piece in the brief summary, but it bears heightened attention. We have now entered the most dangerous time of year for rotor flying. An increase in fire suppression activities, law enforcement flying, and tour flights are upon us. A look at the cumulative accident count chart indicates that between March and September the rate sky rockets at an alarming pace. The data shows a decrease in percentage by 14% over the last 5 years. But as some of us know all too well, that is still not enough. Be vigilant, Be safe, and most of all be as pro-active as you can. Blue Side up as we say.



	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Grand Total
Total Accidents	7	7	11	2	2	13	6	8					56
Fatal Accidents	1	1	2	0	0	4	1	1					10
Fatalities	1	2	5	0	0	11	2	1					22

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Grand Total
Accident Rate	2.93	3.42	6.15	1.07	0.94	5.27	2.40	3.25					3.17
Fatal Accident Rate	0.42	0.49	1.12	0.00	0.00	1.62	0.40	0.41					0.57
Fatalities Rate	0.42	0.98	2.80	0.00	0.00	4.46	0.80	0.41					1.25

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U.S. Registered Rotorcraft 13 Month Accident Count

vs. Same Month Previous Year:

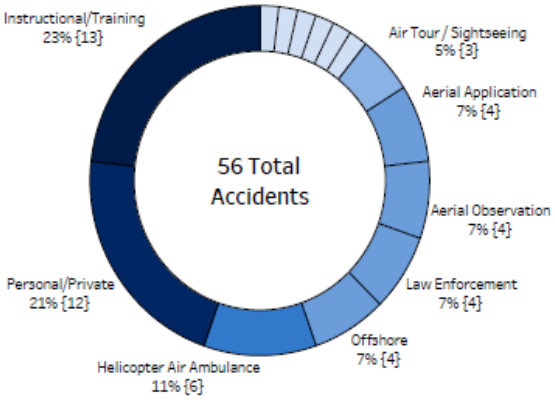
▲14%

vs. 12 Month Average:

▼15%

Accidents by Industry Sector

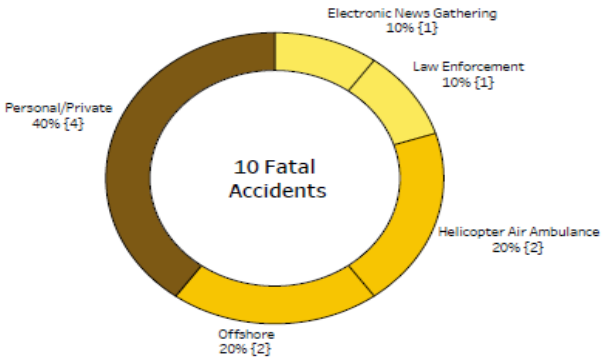
All Accidents



Business	2% {1}
Commercial	2% {1}
Electronic News Gathering	2% {1}
Firefighting	2% {1}
Logging	2% {1}
Unknown	2% {1}
Air Tour / Sightseeing	5% {3}
Aerial Application	7% {4}
Aerial Observation	7% {4}
Law Enforcement	7% {4}
Offshore	7% {4}
Helicopter Air Ambulance	11% {6}
Personal/Private	21% {12}

FY to Date

Fatal Accidents



Electronic News Gathering	10% {1}
Law Enforcement	10% {1}
Helicopter Air Ambulance	20% {2}
Offshore	20% {2}
Personal/Private	40% {4}

FY to Date | This Month

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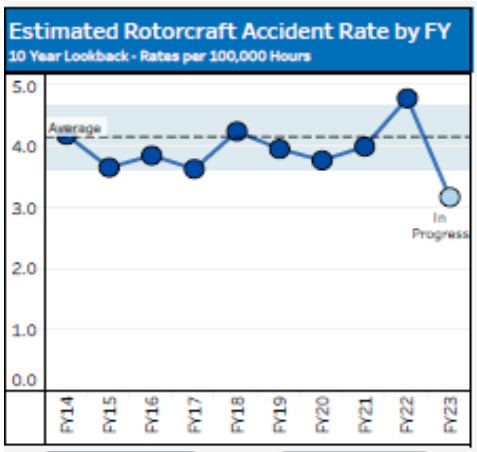
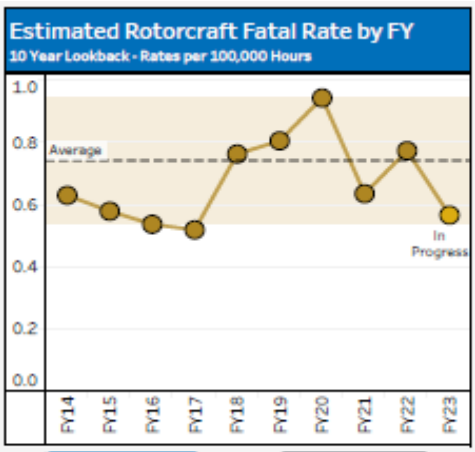
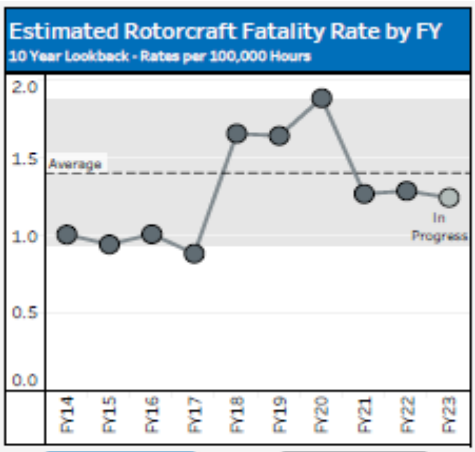


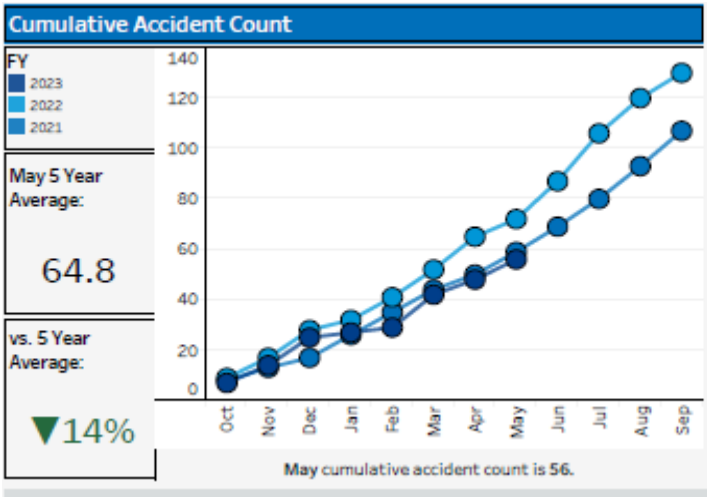


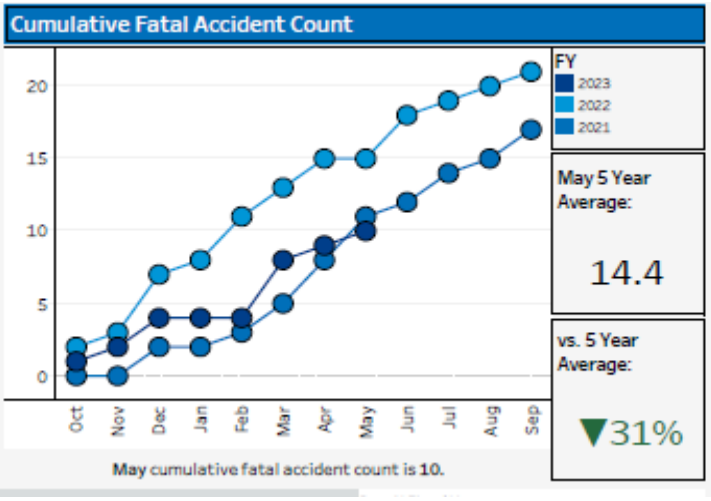


Accident Rates | Learn More | Fatal Rates | Learn More | Fatality Rates | Learn More

	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Accident Rate	4.19	3.66	3.85	3.63	4.25	3.96	3.77	4.00	4.79	3.17
Fatal Accidents Rate	0.63	0.58	0.54	0.52	0.76	0.81	0.94	0.64	0.77	0.57
Fatality Rate	1.01	0.94	1.01	0.89	1.66	1.64	1.89	1.27	1.29	1.25

*Average Rates and Standard Deviation Ranges are for reference, rates are not normally distributed.





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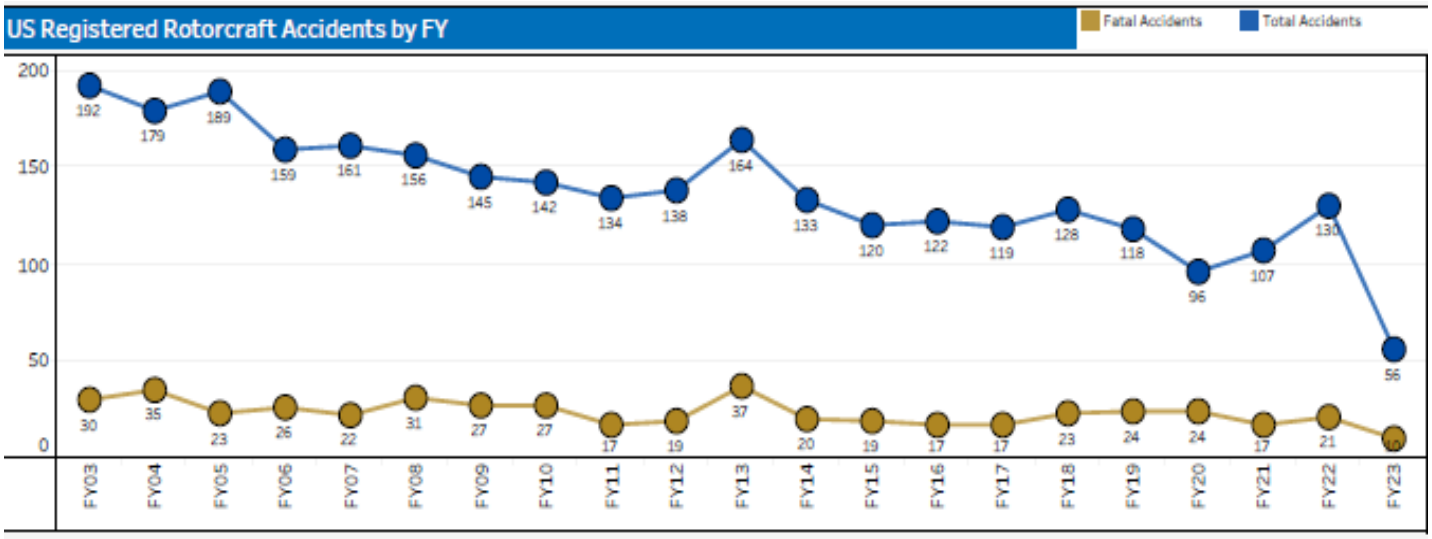

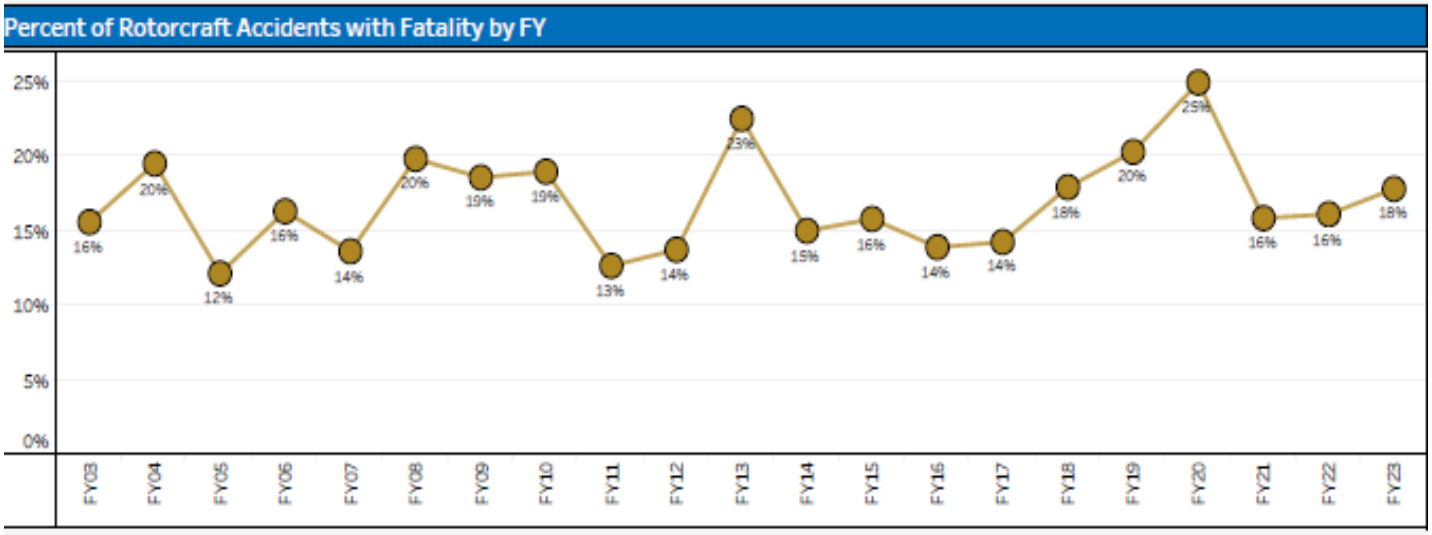

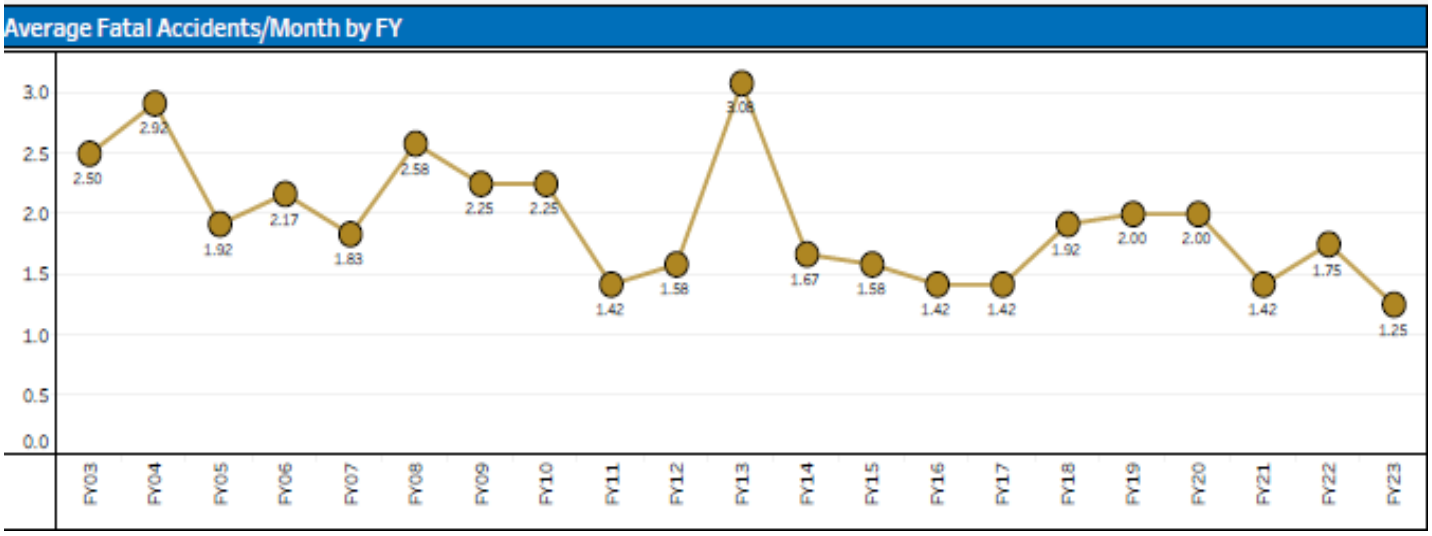

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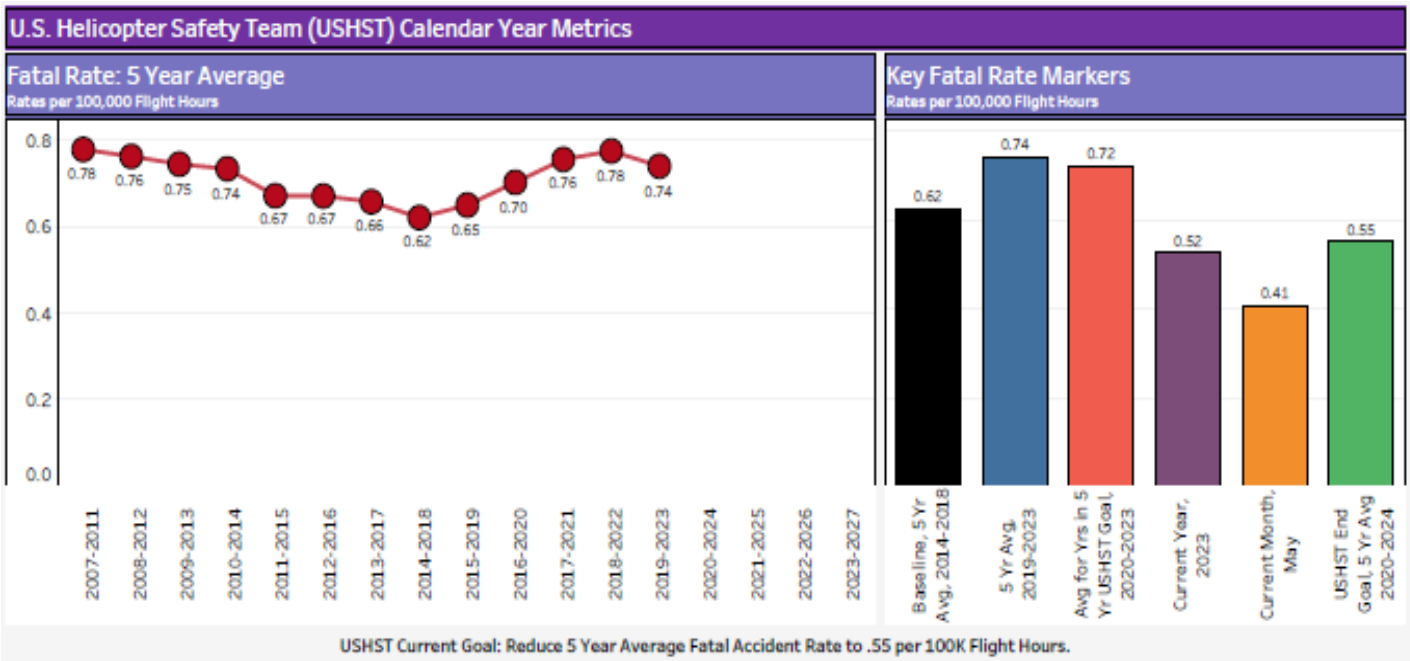

USHST Current Goal: Reduce 5 Year Average Fatal Accident Rate to .55 per 100K Flight Hours.

The following notes apply to all the charts above:

Data is subject to change

*The accident numbers for each month of the Fiscal/Calendar Year may vary from what was reported previously based on analysis between FAA and NTSB databases for the specified month.

*For rate calculations, FY 2022-23 rotorcraft flight hours were based on the FAA's FY2022-2042 forecast (released July 2022). Historic rotorcraft flight hours were extracted from General Aviation and Part 135 Activity Survey. The survey categorizes flight hours by calendar year.

Federal Aviation Administration

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SAFETY MANAGER'S CORNER

With wildfire season in full swing, we felt it was pertinent to remind everyone about the hazards and effects on your staff.

How will I know if smoke will be in my area?

- **Check the Air Quality Index (AQI) for current air quality in your area.**
  - **The AQI is used to report information about the most common air pollutants, including particulate matter (PM2.5 or PM10) and ozone. For more information, visit www.airnow.gov**
- **You can also see the location of fires, the path of smoke plumes, and air quality information on the AirNow website, under "Current Fire Conditions" at: : https:// www.airnow.gov/index.cfm? action=topics.smoke_wildfires**

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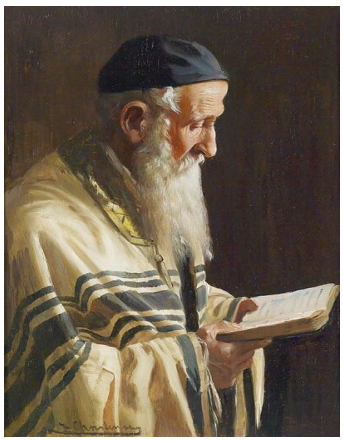
Quote of the Month

If not you, then who? If not now, then when?

— Rabi Hillel the Elder.



The quote is most often attributed to Rabi Hillel the Elder. I doubt we'll ever know who actually said it first. The sentiment however, is fantastic. When we apply it to safety management it embodies the attitude that we should all take. An effective Safety Management System (SMS) requires the involvement of all employees, from top management to front-line workers. By creating a strong safety culture, organizations can create an environment where employees feel empowered to raise safety concerns, participate in safety programs, and report accidents and incidents. If you see something, say something.

On Short Final...

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UPCOMING COURSES

Aug 21 to Aug 25, 2023—PROS Course
Aviation Lead Auditor Training (ALAT)
Denver, CO

Sept 26 to Sept 28, 2023—PRISM Course
Safety Management System (SMS)
Denver, CO

Oct 30 to Nov 3, 2023—PROS Course
Aviation Lead Auditor Training (ALAT)
Denver, CO

Go to Upcoming Training Classes to register.