

• As a companion measure, operators in cooperation with HAI and FAA should institute a regular survey, using a standardized terminology, to obtain statistical information on the operating performance of the fleet. The survey should be simple, easy to complete, and limited in detail to subjects of common interest to all or most operators. The MMIR program now in place should be modified to correlate with the survey data.

HELIPORTS

The increasing restrictions on helicopter operations and landing sites have reduced the number of heliports available to corporate and private operators. To sustain their operations corporations have been forced to build their own private facilities, and heliport construction has become a major expense for these firms.

These expenses, already large, are becoming greater because of public resistance and government bureaucratic delays. In some instances, Federal and state agencies seem to have adopted an adversarial position with regard to corporate and private plans to build heliports, even those that are intended to be public-use facilities.

To ease the burden of heliport development now being borne by corporate sponsors, the provisions of the Airport Improvement Program should be revised to allow greater freedom for FAA and private corporations to collaborate in funding new public-use helicopter facilities.

PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE

Growing public opposition to helicopter activity is making it more difficult, and more expensive, to operate helicopters—not just for corporate and private operators but for all the helicopter transportation industry. A public relations and public information program should be instituted by the industry and FAA to acquaint the public with the positive aspects of helicopter aviation—the safety record, lifesaving events, public service, and community benefits.

The Fly Neighborly program, while laudable in its goals, has not yet received the full support of the industry. For every pilot who is helping the effort, there is a new one who is not.

Manufacturers should be urged to continue and increase these efforts to develop quieter helicopters.

NEW TECHNOLOGY

There is an urgent need for improved civil helicopter technology. The present fleet is made up largely of older helicopters that are becoming more costly to operate and maintain. While these vehicles will eventually be replaced, the pace is slow given the rising acquisition costs, life-cycle costs, and cost of capital.

The new helicopters now offered by manufacturers are still largely derivatives of military versions that are not well suited to civil requirements. With the decline in military helicopter R&D, civil operators are facing a technology dilemma. The new helicopters on the civil market are more expensive, but unless they are sold manufacturers will not have the funds to develop new models tailored to civil needs and they will have to pass the R&D costs along to their customers in the form of still higher prices. The development of new technology may become stifled.

What is needed is a joint government-industry program that, through subsidies and incentives, will promote and foster civil helicopter R&D.

FUTURE TRAINING NEEDS

Civil helicopter aviation is facing a need for trained and experienced pilots and mechanics. The military services have been the traditional source, but the armed services are being scaled back, and this pipeline may no longer be sufficient. The civil sector will have to assume the responsibility and cost of training the personnel needed.

At the same time the operating environment is becoming more sophisticated and demanding. Corporate and private operators are incurring increased cost for initial and recurrent training programs. The advent of new technology now, and more so in the future, will add to these costs. Pilots must master new, more high-tech vehicles and equipment. Maintenance technicians will need skills to care for engines, electronics, and nontraditional structural materials.

Manufacturers, operators, FAA, and training schools will have to band together in developing new programs and methods to meet the need for technical personnel in the coming century.