

Skydiving Out of a Helicopter

What could be more exhilarating than jumping out of a plane? How about jumping out of a helicopter? There are some rules that need to be followed to ensure compliance and that everything goes safely.



Helicopter parachuting really came to public attention in 2012 when 'Queen Elizabeth II' and James Bond parachuted from an AgustaWestland AW139 helicopter into the opening of the 2012 London Olympics. As awesome as it looked, given the costs involved, demand for such a jump is expected to be more 'niche' than fixed-wing skydiving, and reserved for the biggest adrenaline junkies.

With this market developing however, there are important rules and procedures that must be taken into account by any helicopter operator getting into this business – whether you are being leased for the flights or running it yourself. The Company Operations Specifications will require amending to also include parachute operations.

"Just like you have standard operating procedures for heli-ski, sling, or a monsoon bucket, you must have them for skydiving," says CAA Flight Operations Inspector, Mac McCarthy.

"What would the procedure be if tandem skydivers exited the helicopter and got caught on the skids? Or in the case of James Dobb in the UK in 2013 who, in a video that went viral, had his

parachute accidentally deploy between the skid and airframe with the potential to open into the tail rotor blades. Both are unlikely to happen, but you need to have procedures in place to ensure that the operation can be conducted safely."

Anyone considering parachute operations needs to be aware of Part 115 *Adventure Aviation – Certification and Operations*. Operators certificated under Part 135 can do parachute operations but must meet any requirements under rules 61.651, 91.705, 91.707, and Part 115. Authorisations from a parachute Part 149 organisation will also apply to the skydivers and the parachute landing area.

105.5 Persons making parachute descents

(a) Except as provided in paragraphs (b) and (c), a person making a parachute descent must:

- (1) hold a parachutist certificate; and
- (2) comply with the privileges and limitations of the certificate and any ratings; and
- (3) comply with the operational standards and procedures contained in the parachute organisation's exposition.



Photo courtesy of Skydive the Beach and Beyond.

The two parachute Part 149 organisations are the New Zealand Parachute Industry Association (NZPIA) and the New Zealand Parachute Organisation (NZPO).

“Operators need to ensure that employees are appropriately qualified and trained,” says Mac, “and that any equipment is appropriate to the task and properly maintained; and that key people are fit and proper to undertake their responsibilities.

“This applies whether you are running the operations yourself, or your helicopters are being leased to run the flights on behalf of a parachuting company.”

If you are looking at starting, or have been approached in relation to these operations, don't forget the CAA is here to help. If you have any doubts or questions, get in touch with the Flight Operations Adventure Aviation team, tel: 04 560 9457, or email Mac.Mccarthy@caa.govt.nz, or Mark.Houston@caa.govt.nz if it is about jump pilot ratings.

The Civil Aviation Rules are available on our web site, www.caa.govt.nz, under “Rules”. ■

BFR – Are You Current?

A Biennial Flight Review (BFR) is a flight review every two years. It gives you the chance to maintain and improve your skills.

During a BFR, the instructor reviews your current level of knowledge and proficiency. It is not a test where you have only one opportunity to pass. If you're not up to scratch, you'll get a chance to practise until you are.

The BFR is also an opportunity for you to confirm with your instructor that you are up-to-date with any changes to airspace and rules that may have been introduced since your last BFR.

Roger Shepherd, CAA Investigating Officer ARCs, says, “As a pilot, you should be aware of when your BFR is due and make sure you complete it on time. Your instructor will send the paperwork to the CAA after the successful completion of your BFR.”

“Don't leave it until the last minute,” he advises. “The review may take a number of flights. The rules allow you to complete your BFR 60 days before it is due to expire and it is deemed to have been completed on the required date.”

You must complete the BFR to be able to continue to use the privileges of your licence, unless exempted by one of the conditions in rule 61.39(b). If your BFR has expired, you can fly only as a student pilot (solo and under supervision).

The CAA has produced a free bookmark that slots into the pilot logbook. This bookmark has a space to note down your BFR renewal date – email info@caa.govt.nz for one.

Also, brush up on the techniques required for the BFR by referring to the *Flight Test Standards Guides*, available on the CAA web site, www.caa.govt.nz, “Pilots”.

More Information

Rule 61.39 *Biennial flight review*, available on the CAA web site, “Rules”.

Vector article, Biennial Flight Review, Nov/Dec 2008. ■

