

EDUCATION AND SAFETY

It's no secret; helicopters have more accidents than aeroplanes! Why? There are several theories; inherent instability, too many moving parts, harder to fly – who knows, maybe it's all of these things. But everyone seems to agree that it would be great to make rotary wing flight safer.

In New Zealand it generally happens like this: There are a higher number of accidents than usual during the year. The media recognise this and question the Director of Civil Aviation, who in turn plans a conference with all the big helicopter industry names. The conference takes place in a nice hotel and everyone drinks tea and talks flight safety and strategy. Some new directives and regulations are put in place. The operators wince, but grin and bear it. Everyone hopes there are fewer accidents in the following year. Sooner or later, there is another bad year and the process starts all over again.

I was always an avid reader of Accident Reports. I learnt a lot as a young pilot... even with a PHL and less than 100 hours I'd think; "Jeez, how did he let THAT happen?" "How did a guy with such high hours fall into that trap?" or, "Well, nobody was to blame, it was just an accident." Yes, I'm also a good enough rugby player to be an All Black if only I could play from my armchair whilst watching the replay. So I knew the basics then. I got into the real aerodynamics and physics, mechanical, weather, human factors and all the rest when I went to CHL school. Armed with knowledge and a CPL I was ready to get out there and do it.

But do you know what? One of the biggest causes of fatal accidents is wire strikes. My instructor spent time briefing me but there was nothing in the syllabus, either written or in the Flight Test that even mentioned wire strikes. The biggest thing missing for a lot of things was the 'voice of experience'. I kept going to the funerals of guys who were all immensely more experienced than me and really good pilots.

I decided to do something about helicopter safety myself. So I have written a book with an original format. It didn't take too long to list all the hazards that lead to accidents. Firstly, a simple introduction for student pilots, enthusiasts and beginners to each hazard, then at least one Case Study (sometimes more). Next is an in-depth theory for the Commercial Pilot. And finally; practical notes on how to avoid the hazard or recover from it. With *Steve Bone* helping me and *Bernie Lewis* doing the editing, there's experience to burn.

I told a Commercial Pilot about the book and he said, "Yeah, should be great for student pilots." Really? Guess what? Of the 70 Case Studies less than 5 pilots had under 500 hours. One had 27,000!. Statistics show it isn't the students that need to read this book the most, it's the complacent! *Fatal Traps For Helicopter Pilots* will have 400 pages, 90 photos, 120 diagrams and can be previewed on www.fataltraps.com. Available in mid-August in New Zealand shops, it can be purchased internationally via the website. More info: <http://www.fataltraps.com>
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