

Prior law provided legislative findings that the production of oil for the energy needs of the state and the nation is of vital concern, and the safety of those who work in the offshore industry and those who transport those workers is also of vital concern.

Prior law provided that notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary and prior to January 1, 2011, any aircraft utilized to transport offshore platform workers, to and from the platform, must provide and carry, so placed as to be readily accessible, at least one life preserver, life jacket, or life belt and a personal locator beacon, for each person on board. The personal locator beacon must be capable of transmitting a digital coded distress signal and a permanent homing signal.

New law directs the director of aviation ("DA") of the aviation section of the DOTD to participate in education, communication, and promotion of aviation safety in the offshore oil and gas industry, and states that the legislature's goal is to reduce to as low as reasonably practicable the instances of helicopter accidents in the oil and gas industry by promotion of the adoption of safe practices in such operations.

New law requires the DA to request membership into the Helicopter Safety Advisory Conference ("HSAC"), regularly attend scheduled meetings of HSAC for the purpose of education, understanding and dissemination of information developed for the purpose of the promotion of safety through cooperation, and encourage all operators who provide over water flight services to the oil and gas industry to adopt and incorporate the recommended practices of HSAC into their daily operations.

New law provides that the DA may attend and secure all writings in the form of recommended practices that result from HSAC conferences that relate to safe over water helicopter operations, and disseminate such writings in such a way that over water flight service providers in this state or adjacent to its shores are made aware of its content.

New law provides that among the considerations for helicopter safety in over water flight services in the oil and gas industry, the DA may identify, evaluate and maintain current knowledge of available feasible technology for all of the following:

1. Personal locator beacons ("PLBs") capable of transmitting a digital coded distress signal and a permanent homing signal suitable for use in over water flight services utilized in the oil and gas industry.
2. Incorporation into the daily operations of all operators a system for satellite tracking of helicopters conducting over water flights, including maintaining a command center to monitor the status of such flights.
3. Improvement of flight safety over water services by adoption of emerging advances in aviation. The DA or his designated representative shall also promote enhancements in required pre-flight briefings to maximize passenger awareness of passenger safety, and emergency procedures. Where appropriate, the DA shall provide information and recommendations to HSAC for consideration of recommended practices for industry use of such systems and devices.

New law requires the DA to maintain familiarity with all applicable federal regulations promulgated by the FAA pertaining to over water helicopter operations, and may also obtain and review all advisory circulars of the FAA that relate to such over water helicopter operations in this state or adjacent to its shores, issued under those parts of the Federal Aviation Regulations ("FAR"). Where appropriate, the DA shall promote the adherence to the regulations and adoption of the HSAC recommended practices.

New law requires the DA to facilitate, as he deems necessary, information to the directors of operations for operators who provide over water flight services in this state or adjacent to its shores, through publication on the Internet through an identifiable link on the DOTD website, summaries and or text of relevant new FAR and Advisory Circulars published by the FAA or Recommended Practices published by HSAC.

New law requires the DA to publish a report to the legislature, directed to the chairs of the House and Senate committees on transportation, highways and public works, wherein the DA shall summarize and comment upon all of the following:

1. The previous year's developments in safe practices for operators who provide over water flight services in the state or adjacent to its shores, as such safe practices have evolved over the previous 12 months, through the federal and industry organizations referenced above.
2. Efforts made by the DA to insure knowledge of all such practices by operators within the industry.

New law requires that the report be delivered to the committees no later than September 1, annually. A copy of the report shall also be sent to the director of operations of each helicopter operator then known by the DA to be engaged in providing over water flight services in the offshore oil and gas industry.

Effective upon signature of the governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Amends R.S. 40:1486.1 and 1486.2)