

Follow-up Action on Occurrence Report

ACCIDENT TO PONSFORD BENSEN B8MR, G-BIGU, AT SHIPDHAM AIRFIELD ON 29 JUNE 2003
(ROTOR BLADES STRUCK THE RUDDER, RENDERING THE GYROPLANE UNCONTROLLABLE)

CAA FACTOR NUMBER : F31/2004
FACTOR PUBLICATION DATE : 13 September 2004
OPERATOR : Private
CAA OCCURRENCE NUMBER : 2003/04082
AAIB REPORT : Bulletin 9/2004

SYNOPSIS

(From AAIB Report)

The accident occurred on the first unsupervised flight following the pilot's completion of his Private Pilot's Licence (Gyroplanes) course. It resulted from the rotor blades striking the rudder, which rendered the gyroplane uncontrollable. Witness accounts indicated that G-BIGU was flying straight and level at a reasonable speed just before the event, although there were reports of possible 'over-controlling' during the flight.

The specific reason for the rotor blades striking the rudder could not be determined but a pilot induced oscillation appeared to be the probable cause. An examination of the aircraft, and subsequent computer modelling by the University of Glasgow indicated that the aircraft could have had poor longitudinal stability characteristics. The investigation also highlighted the poor safety record of gyroplanes in general compared to other types of recreational aircraft. Accordingly, recommendations have been made concerning the approval of gyroplanes and the training and licensing of gyroplane pilots.

FOLLOW UP ACTION

The four Safety Recommendations, made by the AAIB following their investigation, are reproduced below, together with the CAA's responses.

Recommendation 2004-42

The Civil Aviation Authority should differentiate between wheel balancing and airborne exercises when detailing the flying hours required for the issue of a Private Pilot's Licence (Gyroplanes).

CAA Response

The CAA accepts this Recommendation.

The CAA will make the necessary amendments to the Private Pilot's Licence (Gyroplanes) requirements in the LASORS (Licensing, Administration, Standardisation, Operating Requirements and Procedures) publication in time for the next re-print, which is scheduled for January 2005.

CAA Status – Open

Recommendation 2004-43

The Civil Aviation Authority should review the present gyroplane training requirements with the aim of establishing a minimum number of supervised flying hours, discounting wheel balancing, when undertaking differences training on gyroplanes.

CAA Response

The CAA accepts this Recommendation.

Following a review of the present gyroplane training requirements, the CAA will introduce a specified minimum number of supervised flying hours, discounting wheel balancing, for differences training on gyroplanes. The necessary amendments to the Private Pilot's Licence (Gyroplanes) requirements in the LASORS (Licensing, Administration, Standardisation, Operating Requirements and Procedures) publication will be made in time for the next re-print, which is scheduled for January 2005. In the meantime all Gyroplane Flying Instructors will be instructed, by letter, to implement the change to flight training with immediate effect.

CAA Status - Open

Recommendation 2004-44

It is recommended that the Civil Aviation Authority in conjunction with the Popular Flying Association (PFA) ensures that test pilots evaluating the handling qualities of gyroplanes against BCAR Civil Regulation Section 'T' are appropriately trained to make such evaluations.

CAA Response

The CAA accepts this recommendation.

The CAA is working with the PFA to define a process which ensures that test pilots evaluating the handling qualities of gyroplanes against BCAR Section T requirements are appropriately trained to make such an evaluation. This work will be completed by end 2004.

CAA Status - Open

Recommendation 2004-45

It is recommended that the Popular Flying Association (PFA) in conjunction with the Civil Aviation Authority revises the format of the PFA Gyroplane Flight Test Schedule such that a completed form contains all the data required by British Civil Airworthiness Regulations Section 'T'.

CAA Response

The CAA accepts this recommendation.

The CAA is working with the PFA to define a process which ensures gyroplane flight test schedules include fields for recording all the data required by BCAR Section T. This work will be completed by end 2004.

CAA Status - Open