

## 13.3: Helicopters

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### Helicopters

#### General

Helicopters are becoming more widely used on construction sites today for lifting and rigging purposes. Helicopters have long been in use for setting electrical transmission towers as well. OSHA regulations require that helicopter cranes comply with any applicable regulations of the Federal Aviation Administration.

#### Briefing

Prior to each day's operation, a briefing shall be conducted. This briefing shall set forth the plan of operation for the pilot and ground personnel.

#### Slings and tag lines

Load shall be properly slung. Tag lines shall be of a length that will not permit their being drawn up into rotors. Pressed sleeve, swedged eyes, or equivalent means shall be used for all freely suspended loads to prevent hand splices from spinning open or cable clamps from loosening.

#### Cargo Hooks

All electrically operated cargo hooks shall have the electrical activating device so designed and installed as to prevent inadvertent operation. In addition, these cargo hooks shall be equipped with an emergency mechanical control for releasing the load. The hooks shall be tested prior to each day's operation to determine that the release functions properly, both electrically and mechanically.

#### Personal Protective Equipment

Personal protective equipment for employees receiving the load shall consist of complete eye protection and hard hats secured by chinstraps. Loose-fitting clothing likely to flap in the downwash, and thus be snagged on hoist line, shall not be worn.

#### Loose gear and objects

Every practical precaution shall be taken to provide for the protection of the employees from flying objects in the rotor downwash. All loose gear within 100 feet of the place of lifting the load, depositing the load, and all other areas susceptible to rotor downwash shall be secured or removed.

#### Housekeeping

Good housekeeping shall be maintained in all helicopter loading and unloading areas.

#### Operator responsibility

The helicopter operator shall be responsible for size, weight, and manner in which loads are connected to the helicopter. If, for any reason, the helicopter operator believes the lift cannot be made safely, the lift shall not be made.

#### Hooking and unhooking loads

When employees are required to perform work under hovering craft, a safe means of access shall be provided for employees to reach the hoist line hook and engage or disengage cargo slings. Employees shall not perform work under hovering craft except when necessary to hook or unhook loads.

#### Static charge

Static charge on the suspended load shall be dissipated with a grounding device before ground personnel touch the suspended load, or protective rubber gloves shall be worn by all ground personnel touching the suspended load.

#### Weight limitations

The weight of an external load shall not exceed the manufacturer's rating. Hoist wires or other gear, except for pulling lines or conductors that are allowed to "payout" from a container or roll off a reel, shall not be attached to any fixed ground structure, or allowed to foul on any fixed structure.

### Visibility

When visibility is reduced by dust or other conditions, ground personnel shall exercise special caution to keep clear of main and stabilizing rotors. Precautions shall also be taken by the employer to eliminate as far as practical reduced visibility.

### Signal Systems

Signal systems between aircrew and ground personnel shall be understood and checked in advance of hoisting the load. This applies to either radio or hand signal systems.

### Approach distance

No unauthorized person shall be allowed to approach within 50 feet of the helicopter when the rotor blades are turning.

### Approaching helicopter

Whenever approaching or leaving a helicopter with blades rotating, all employees shall remain in full view of the pilot and keep in a crouched position. Employees shall avoid the area from the cockpit or cabin rearward unless authorized by the helicopter operator to work there.

### Personnel

Sufficient ground personnel shall be provided when required for safe helicopter loading and unloading operations.

### Communications

There shall be constant reliable communication between the pilot and a designated employee of the ground crew who acts as a signalman during the period of loading and unloading. This signalman shall be distinctly recognizable from other ground personnel.

### Fires

Open fires shall not be permitted in an area that could result in such fires being spread by the rotor downwash

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