HELICOPTER AVIATION SAFETY INITIATIVES DEMONSTRATE PROGRESS IN MEXICO AND INDIA

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In 2017, Airbus' helicopter division safety expert, Erick Perez, led a number of safety initiatives in Latin America, all in an effort to improve helicopter flight safety in the region. Meeting with employees from the manufacturer's customer centres, and at operators' and authorities' offices in Chile, Mexico, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Ecuador and Costa Rica, Perez spoke about the critical need for safety in aviation. "In 2017, we raised awareness on helicopter flight safety for nearly 2,000 people," explains Perez. "That's roughly the same number of people we saw over the last five years."

The battle to address helicopter aviation safety is at a peak, with airspace busier than ever and the demand for aeronautic solutions growing. Some 85% of helicopter accidents have been shown to be due to operational causes. To address this, Airbus' helicopter division actively works with operators and authorities to reduce accident rates. For the past 11 years, the manufacturer has held safety roadshows in an effort to encourage dialogue around the practical elements of safety in flight operations. In 2017, nearly 100 roadshows were organised worldwide.

In Mexico, Erick Perez went a step further. While the accident rate in Mexico has decreased by 65% in seven years, it remains high in comparison to that of North America and Europe.

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As co-chairman of the International Helicopter Safety Team (IHST) for Mexico, where Perez represents the industrial side of the table, in 2017 he helped to found its Chilean branch. He supervised the organisation of 13 safety roadshows, carried out surveys with operators to understand their safety expectations, implemented an efficient crisis management system in the event of accidents and coordinated training activities so as to incorporate safety aims. Perez also led safety talks at customer centres in Mexico and Chile, and contributed to translating, proofreading and approving numerous documents in Spanish that promote safety.

Perez is not alone. In India, Rajan Raman, a technical director at Airbus' helicopter division in India, helped organise no fewer than 18 safety roadshows in Nepal and India with operators and authorities. India - where 107 Airbus helicopters fly on behalf of 38 customers – is at the forefront of a host of helicopter flight safety efforts, both by operators and aviation authorities, aimed at addressing the country's burgeoning aviation industry.

During safety roadshows, participants showed particular interest in the practical application of safety management systems (SMS) during daily maintenance operations and missions. In 2018, Rajan Raman will continue his efforts, with a presentation to the Rotary Wing Society of India (RWSI) and discussions with authorities on the use of single engine aircraft for projects aimed at improving access to mountainous regions.

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