

Becoming a Helicopter Pilot



Why Fly? - and Why Fly a Helicopter?

Flying is the greatest adventure, career and a most enjoyable hobby - for people of all ages. It is, by far, the most comfortable and accessible way to explore this magnificent country. With a helicopter you can reach areas which are otherwise inaccessible - and you can stop for a picnic. No other vehicle gives you this freedom. The helicopter has proven itself to be the most efficient way to achieve many difficult tasks such as rescue, mustering, aerial inspection and sightseeing. To see the world from a helicopter which you, yourself, are flying, is an incredible, indelible experience and one which you can share with your partner and friends.

Rotary-winged flight is within the reach of everyone. A helicopter is a valuable business tool and helicopter flying can be a fabulous career. It's great fun and there are some great new helicopter designs.

Why Fly a Helicopter?

A helicopter adds a new dimension to flight. Not only can you reach inaccessible places, you can hover and land there. You can explore, take photos, lift external loads, carry cameras or rescue sick and injured animals and people. A helicopter can be an asset, a business tool, a ute, a pleasure craft and a fun machine.

What does a Helicopter Pilot do?

Every pilot's ultimate task is managing the flight. This requires not only piloting the helicopter but also being aware of its position, being responsible for its progress, talking and listening to air traffic services and other helicopters and monitoring the weather, the systems, passengers and crew.

A pilot must be in control of the helicopter and in command of the situation. While doing this he is weighing up options and anticipating outcomes and staying alert.

The flightpath of the helicopter - upwards, downwards, backwards, sideways or hovering, is controlled by setting and continuously adjusting:

- the angle of the rotor disc (with the cyclic control column); and
- the total rotor thrust (by adjusting the collective lever).

Additionally the pilot controls the engine power and balances the direction with the anti-torque pedals.



Licences, Ratings and Endorsements.

Pilots are licensed at four levels:

- Student Pilot (SPL-H)
- Private Pilot (PPL-H)
- Commercial Pilot (CPL-H)
- Airline Transport Pilot (ATPL-H)

To the licences are added ratings - for night flying, for specific multi-engine or turbine helicopters, to give flight instruction or for flight under instrument flight conditions (in cloud or rain). Also, there are logbook endorsements for water operations, cattle mustering, crop-dusting and formation flying

Who can become a Helicopter Pilot?

Our potential to be a pilot depends on personal attributes and how they are developed. These attributes include:

- knowledge (learning ability and study);
- skill (aptitude plus quality of training); and
- personal qualities (your attitude, self-discipline, motivation and determination).

Knowledge.

A pilot needs to understand the control and behaviour of an helicopter, navigation,



weather forecasts, radio procedures and rules-of-the-air. This study can be done by attending classes, by home study, by correspondence or by personal tuition. The theory associated with piloting is elementary. No complex calculations are necessary. For PPL and CPL, basic mathematics and physics are adequate. For ATPL, high school certificate is appropriate.

Skills.

There are two types of skill:

- control skills; and
- command skills.

Control skills are associated with manipulating the controls and operating the systems. A helicopter requires good coordination skills because it is less stable and therefore requires continuous pilot inputs.

Command skills relate to anticipation, judgement, discipline and decision-making. Both types of skill can be developed.

Personal Qualities.

More important than any other aspect is your personal make-up and personality. If you are good at multi-tasking, that is, doing two things at once or in order of priority, are reliable and able to see the essence of a problem rather than the detail, and are calm under stress, then you are particularly suited to aviation. Your personal motivation and drive to be the best, is the single most important factor in aviation training.

Opportunities for a Helicopter Flying Career

Military Flying

The Defence forces offer appointments for trainee pilots and you should seek current advice from the local recruiting office. They have a collection of amazing rotary-wing aircraft featuring leading-edge technology - from Squirrels and Jet Rangers to the Blackhawks and Tigers. There is nothing to compare with military equipment and operational flying. Military training is superb and the prospect of subsequent employment in civil flying in larger, multi-crew, turbine helicopters is good.

Civil Flying

- *Airlines and Oil Companies.*

Major companies that support oil and mining activities, operate scheduled passenger-carrying, helicopter services. These are run with multi-crew, multi-engine turbine helicopters in just the same way as an airline. The company has its own internal check-and-training system for currency and renewal of ratings. This is an internal operational management system that ensures that all crews maintain high safety and maintenance standards.

- *General Aviation.* General Aviation (GA) encompasses all other helicopter operations

including fence and power line patrols, aerial photography, fire-fighting, cattle mustering, rescue and aerial ambulance, TV news and traffic, scenic flights, charter flights, coastal surveillance, private flying, agricultural flying and flying instruction.

GA is where most pilots build experience before moving to faster, bigger and more complex, turbine helicopters.

The opportunities for initial employment vary from time to time and from region to region. Generally, if you are prepared to look for work and relocate if necessary, then something will come up. However, you may have to accept part-

time or casual employment to begin with. Some schools also operate charter and tourism companies where there is an opportunity for employment and maybe a turbine endorsement.

Many new pilots become instructors to build experience and flying hours. There is nothing wrong with this as long as the task is approached with dedication and enthusiasm. Some people are natural teachers and remain instructors as their lifetime career. It can be very rewarding.

