



**U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region**

Notice No. 075

September 20, 1978

OCS Operations Safety Alert

Helicopter Crashes -- 17 Fatalities

A helicopter carrying a pilot, co-pilot, and 17 passengers collided with steel cable on a crane while attempting to land and crashed. Only the co-pilot and one passenger survived.

Due to wind conditions, lateral control of the aircraft was lost while landing. The helicopter slipped sideways in the direction the wind was blowing, and the main rotor struck a one-inch thick steel cable which was suspended from the crane boom. The impact of the collision shattered the main rotor blades, and severed the steel cable. After the collision, the craft skidded over the edge of the platform and fell into the water over 100' below.

The ensuing investigation revealed that the crane cable was only 5'5" from the skirt of the heliport. The crane was not being used at the time of the accident, and, unfortunately, it had not been turned away from the heliport. Also, winds were observed gusting up to the rated maneuvering limits of the helicopter. Normally, the pilot would turn the nose of the craft into the wind and land without incident. In this instance, the pilot could not turn the craft for fear the rotor would strike the cable.

This accident was caused by two violations of basic established safety rules which are:

1. Anytime a crane is not being used it should be turned away from the heliport or secured in its cradle.
2. Helicopter pilots should not attempt to land when obstructions infringe on the required landing zone.

To prevent recurrence of this type of accident the operator of the helicopter has again instructed pilots not to land where obstructions exist or during crane operations which might trespass on the necessary flight path. In addition, they have requested that the following items be performed by platform personnel:

1. The crane shall be in its cradle or locked with the boom facing 180 away from the heliport when the crane is not in operation.
2. All crane actions shall cease during helicopter activities.
3. The crane operator shall not be at the controls of the crane when helicopter functions are in progress.

[signed] D.W. Solanas

Oil and Gas Supervisor

Operations Support

Gulf of Mexico Area