

AGE LIMITATIONS FOR PILOTS INVOLVED IN COMMERCIAL AIR TRANSPORT

LIMITES D'AGE POUR LES PILOTES DE TRANSPORT AÉRIEN COMMERCIAL

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Introduction: Since 2013 several EASA States reported a shortage of qualified helicopter pilots to perform HEMS Operations. In order to be able to provide medical assistance to all patients the States in question need to use all available proper qualified pilots, including the ones with ages between 60 and 65.

Background: More and more Member States notified the European Commission that they issued an exemption from the requirements regarding age restrictions (FCL.065) for HEMS operations, allowing pilots to fly in single pilot HEMS operations until the age of 65. In order to maintain an increased level of flight safety the operators proposed medical and operational mitigating measures that involve additional medical investigation and increased frequency of the medical examinations as well as reduced working times for these pilots, periodic reports to the licensing authorities and operational restriction to national territory of the Member State. Additionally, the Member States which allowed pilots to fly single pilot HEMS operations up to 65 years old prior to the implementation of Regulation EU 1178/2011, showed that there were no occurrences involving pilots between the ages 60 to 65. However, there are not many research studies related to the risk of incapacitation for pilots above the age of 60 to demonstrate the safety of performing single pilot HEMS operations over the age of 60.

Summary: The increasing number of exemptions as well as the increasing retirement age together with an increased life expectancy and a shift towards an older age for a number of medical conditions inspired EASA to initiate a research project in order to obtain the evidence needed for a decision regarding the age restrictions for pilots involved in commercial air transport as there are multiple question still unanswered. EASA is looking to find a sustainable solution based on scientific evidence that would ensure the safety level is maintained and in the same time the operational need is mitigated.