

► **NOTING THAT NEARLY 1,500 HELICOPTERS HAVE CRASHED** over the past decade, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has added helicopter operations to this year's "Most Wanted List" of transportation safety improvements. Describing that level of accidents "unacceptably high," the board acknowledged that "there is no simple solution" to the problem, but that finding fixes "have the potential to mitigate risk to thousands of pilots and passengers each year." **Specifically, the board says 1,470 helicopter accidents occurred between January 2003 and May 2013, causing 477 fatalities and 274 injuries,** and happened during a time of "overwhelming growth and demand" for emergency medical services, law enforcement support, electronic newsgathering, air tours, and offshore oil and gas support, among other activities. Since helicopter operations are often conducted in a range of environmental conditions, such as in poor weather, at night or at unfamiliar landing sites, the is pushing for the use of safety management systems that incorporate risk management practices, especially involving inspections and maintenance. It also believes the industry should adopt best practices for maintenance and operations, including duty-time limitations and that helicopter emergency medical operations should adopt flight-risk evaluation programs, formalized dispatch and flight following procedures. The board also recommends that operators ensure their pilots have access to training for inadvertent flight into instrument meteorological conditions, autorotations and other scenarios. And it advocates crash-resistant flight recorder systems for helicopters.