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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FAA Approves HAI Petition for Exemption to Allow Air Ambulance Operations

Alexandria, Virginia (January 14, 2022) – Helicopter Association International (HAI) is pleased to announce that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has partially [approved a petition for exemption](#) that HAI had submitted in anticipation of 5G C band deployment, seeking relief from regulations that require a normally functioning radio altimeter for certain operations.

This exemption will allow Part 119 certificate holders authorized to conduct helicopter air ambulance (HAA) operations under Part 135, subpart L, to continue Part 135 helicopter operations while employing radar altimeters that may not function normally due to 5G C band interference. The relief will also allow the use of night-vision goggles (NVGs) in HAA operations.

These exemptions are contingent on certain conditions and limitations. All pilots conducting operations under the exemption are required to receive and maintain a record of proper training. Additional conditions for NVG operations include the installation of a movable searchlight and a requirement for pilots or crew members to establish radio contact with ground personnel at a landing site so they can receive and confirm a description of the landing site.

“This exemption will allow HAA operators to continue to do what they do best—save lives,” says James Viola, president and CEO of HAI. “There is no question that it is in the public interest for these lifesaving operations to continue. HAI’s top priority will always be safety, and we will continue to work with FAA to determine the best solutions, whether through exemptions or through alternative methods of compliance, to provide all our members with the means for continued safe operation.”

HAI submitted the petition in late October as a way to mitigate the safety risks that will be imposed on helicopter operations by Verizon Communications and AT&T’s decision to deploy new 5G communication equipment that overlaps the frequencies used by aircraft radar altimeters. To preserve the level of safety of the National Airspace System, the FAA issued [Airworthiness Directive 2021-23-13](#) in December, followed by an unprecedented number of notices to air missions (NOTAMs) on Jan. 13, 2022.

“This is a significant victory not only for HAA operators but for the countless communities and hospital networks that would have been deprived of the critical life-saving support that can only be offered by helicopter operations,” says John Shea, director of Government Affairs at HAI. “While this is great news for the HAA sector, the even bigger story is that the FAA’s decision on HAI’s petition has outlined a path for replicating this exemption for other helicopter operations that serve the public interest.”

HAI EXEMPTION

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“HAI is very grateful for the support we received from other associations, including the Air Medical Operators Association and the Association of Air Medical Services, and several HAI member air medical operators,” says Viola.

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HAI is the professional trade association for the international helicopter industry and represents more than 1,100 companies and over 16,000 industry professionals in more than 65 countries. Each year, HAI members safely operate more than 3,700 helicopters and remotely piloted aircraft approximately 2.9 million hours. HAI is dedicated to the promotion of the helicopter as a safe, effective method of commerce and to the advancement of the international helicopter community.