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HAI Statement on March 23 NTSB Hearing

Alexandria, Va. (March 23, 2021) – Helicopter Association International (HAI) appreciates and supports the work of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) for their March 23 hearing to ensure the safety of flights for paying passengers in all aircraft.

“At HAI we believe that elevating the safety culture of our VTOL industry is a global imperative,” says James Viola, president and CEO of HAI. “Helicopters are used in a wide variety of missions, including flights with paying passengers. Our industry is committed to improving operational safety for all mission segments.”

HAI supports the requirement for a safety management system (SMS) for any for-hire passenger-carrying operation. Additionally, HAI strongly recommends that all aviation operations, not just those for hire that carry passengers, adopt an SMS program. An SMS provides a ready-made, ongoing process to improve operational safety and is endorsed by aviation regulators and safety organizations around the world as the best way to systematically manage aviation risk.

“Properly managed SMS programs start at the highest level of a company. Application of the SMS program then expands to include every employee at the firm, recognizing that each person can and should identify safety hazards. This level of responsibility— from top to bottom—has been shown to reduce the risk of accidents,” continues Viola.

Although the NTSB did not address the subject extensively during today’s hearing, HAI also supports continual training of all pilots, starting at the earliest stages of their flight careers.

“The FAA Safety Team has cited studies showing that pilots who undergo routine training are 10 times less likely to have an accident,” says Viola. “That statistic alone should demonstrate the value of pilot training, particularly to pilots.

“For pilots, the development of a personal safety culture must begin on the first day of flight school and never stop. Each flight is another test of our commitment to fly safely, which is our highest duty,” Viola adds.

“Aviation operations must build a robust safety culture where each person is empowered and encouraged by management to take personal responsibility for improving operational safety by following established policies and procedures and reporting identified hazards.

“We extend our appreciation to the staff and board members of the NTSB for their time, expertise, and efforts to improve flight safety for paying passengers,” Viola says.

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HAI is the professional trade association for the international helicopter industry. HAI members represent more than 3,000 aviation businesses and individuals who safely operate more than 4,500 helicopters approximately 2.3 million hours each year in more than 73 nations. 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.