



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PRESS RELEASE

FAA Enhances Human External Cargo Harness Standard

VAI argued for harmonized standards for safety compliance.

Alexandria, VA (December 3, 2024) – The FAA has issued a revised policy for the harnesses used for fall protection by utility lineworkers when performing human external cargo (HEC) operations. This decision ensures uniformity, enhances safety, and promotes operational compliance with existing local, state, and federal safety rules.

Vertical Aviation International (VAI) urged the FAA to broaden the scope of the nationally recognized standard for HEC harnesses to address discrepancies between FAA and OSHA regulations for full-body harnesses. These discrepancies created a fragmented operational framework, posing significant compliance challenges for operators and utilities alike.

VAI's regulatory team urged the FAA to align federal policies with the consensus ANSI standard, which is accepted by OSHA, utilities, unions, and harness manufacturers. The [American National Standards Institute \(ANSI\)](#), a private nonprofit organization, develops widely respected standards for products, services, and systems recognized by both industry and government. The FAA's updated policy recognizes that harnesses compliant with [ANSI/ASSP Z359.11](#) meet or exceed performance requirements and can be safely used in HEC operations.

The FAA's policy statement ([PS-AIR 27/29.865](#)) emphasized that these harnesses remain subject to rigorous maintenance, inspection, and retirement protocols, ensuring their continued reliability and durability.

"This policy change is a testament to the importance of collaboration between industry and regulators," says James Viola, president and CEO of VAI. "By adopting the ANSI standard, the FAA has not only enhanced safety but also simplified the regulatory landscape for operators and utilities working to maintain our national power grid."

Viola adds that in addition to enabling greater operational consistency and reducing compliance burdens, the new policy will ultimately allow for greater innovation in harness design that both meets ANSI specifications and better protects utility lineworkers.

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Vertical Aviation International (VAI), formerly Helicopter Association International (HAI), is the world's leading membership association dedicated to the vertical aviation industry, which encompasses all aircraft capable of vertical or short takeoff and landing. Throughout its 75 years of fueling industry growth through connection, advocacy, safety, education, and support for its members' success, VAI has leveraged the power of vertical flight to strengthen communities worldwide. The association welcomes all facets of the vertical aviation industry, including manufacturers, operators, suppliers and vendors, pilots and maintenance technicians, and other aviation professionals. For more information about VAI, please visit: <https://verticalavi.org/>

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