

SAFETY ALERT



Helicopter Rotor Downwash Hazard



A recent incident on runway 03 occurred when a light aircraft experienced a balloon in the flare followed by a heavy landing. No damage was sustained to the aircraft.

It has been determined that the balloon in the landing flare was due to rotor wash turbulence from a medium sized helicopter holding at the intersection of taxiway Bravo and Sierra. The helicopter was holding in a hover and was well clear of the runway. Wind conditions on the day were light and variable. At the time of the incident the AWIB Metdata indicated a wind of 054 degrees Mag. at 4.5 knots. As the wind was coming from behind the helicopter, we believe the rotor wash was blown onto the runway which represents an estimated drifting distance of 70 metres.

The helicopter operator is looking at ways to mitigate rotor downwash in similar situations.

Pilots of fixed wing aircraft need to be aware that the rotor downwash hazard from a 5-tonne helicopter is considerable and that wind direction and proximity are factors.

If in doubt, go around.

Other feedback from helicopter pilots that is unrelated to this incident but relevant are that pilots of taxiing fixed wing aircraft often taxi too close to helicopters and seem unaware of the potential risk. Please exercise caution and if necessary, stop and wait for the helicopter to clear the area.