



# HELICOPTER OPERATIONS

Helicopter operations at London Stansted Airport are daily occurrence and as with fixed wing aircraft operations, they conform to many operating restrictions, industry codes of best practice and legislation relating to their safe operation.

## HOW MANY HELICOPTER OPERATIONS OCCUR FROM OR TO STANSTED?

In 2010 there were on average between six and ten helicopter movements that arrived or departed from the airport each day. This does not include police, ambulance, military or other non Stansted helicopter movements which are permitted to fly through the Controlled Airspace around the airport.

## WHAT TIMES OF DAY CAN THEY OPERATE?

London Stansted Airport is a 24 hour operation and as such, helicopters can operate at any time. During the hours of 07:00hrs until 23:00hrs and in good visibility, they will generally arrive and depart from the 'H' (a defined take-off and landing point for helicopters) which is situated north of the airfield. The government has set restrictions on the numbers and types of aircraft that can operate throughout the night, these restrictions also apply to helicopters.

At all other times and if there is poor visibility, they will depart from the runway. Occasionally there may be an operational requirement for a helicopter to depart from the runway during the daytime in good visibility, however, this is kept to a minimum.

## DO HELICOPTERS FOLLOW THE SAME NOISE PREFERENTIAL ROUTES (FLIGHT PATHS) AS FIXED WING AIRCRAFT?

All jet aircraft, and propeller driven aircraft above 5,700kg, are required to follow designated Noise Preferential Routes (NPRs). Helicopters operate differently, using Visual Reference Points (VRPs) to navigate their routes and do not follow NPRs.

## WHAT ARE VISUAL REFERENCE POINTS (VRPS)?

VRPs are prominent man-made or natural features, such as main roads, motorways, buildings, lakes, railway stations which are clearly identifiable from the air. They are sometimes used to assist helicopter pilots to plan alternative routes around areas of Controlled Airspace if required. Visual Flight Rules (VFRs) require aircraft to maintain visual observations, helicopters may deviate away from the VRPs for reasons of safety, such as, safe separation from other aircraft and low cloud.

## DO HELICOPTERS USE VRPS AT NIGHT?

As VRPs are ground features that are clearly visible from the air, they are not necessarily visible in the dark. Many helicopters are now equipped with satellite navigation equipment which includes a database of all navigation features, including VRPs. However, it should be noted that the majority of private helicopter operations take place during the day light hours.

## WHAT IS THE MINIMUM OPERATING HEIGHT FOR A HELICOPTER?

Helicopters operate in accordance with the low flying rules contained within The Rules of the Air Regulations 2007, these state that except with the written permission of the Civil Aviation Authority, an aircraft flying over a congested area of a city, town or settlement shall not fly below a height of 1000ft above the highest fixed obstacle within a horizontal radius of 600 metres of the aircraft.

There are exemptions to the low flying rules when departing or landing at an aerodrome, they include Police and Air Ambulance helicopters which have special dispensation to operate safely at lower levels and may also hover for extended periods. Additionally, military helicopters (and aircraft) are not governed by these civil regulations.



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## HOW HIGH CAN HELICOPTERS FLY?

The maximum height that helicopters can operate in controlled airspace around the airport is 2000ft. There is a safety requirement for helicopters and other light aircraft to remain a safe vertical and lateral distance away from other aircraft at all times.

## CAN I REQUEST THAT HELICOPTERS DO NOT FLY OVER MY HOUSE?

No, there are no restricted or prohibited areas. As helicopters are flying visually they cannot be requested to avoid specific locations, except for those associated with a major incident in unusual circumstances, such as to avoid fire.

## HOW DO I MAKE A COMPLAINT ABOUT HELICOPTER NOISE?

Helicopters are permitted to land and take-off from London Stansted Airport. On average, we would expect around 10 helicopter movements each day. In addition to these, there may be Police, Military, medical emergency or aerial surveying helicopters (e.g. for power line or pipeline surveys) that need to fly within the airspace in and around London Stansted airport. Also, on occasions, emergency and compassionate helicopter flights may need to land at, and depart from, the airport.

If we receive a noise complaint about any helicopter movement, we will log the complaint and respond to the noise complainant accordingly stating whether the flight was associated with the airport's operation. However, unlike fixed wing aircraft movements, the airport does not have access to any flight track, height or noise

monitor data associated with any helicopter operations. Therefore we cannot respond with the same degree of information about these flights as with fixed-wing movements. Equally, we do not have access to details of helicopter movements for the emergency services, military or other helicopter movements.

Further details on helicopter operations can be found on the Civil Aviation Authority website ([www.caa.co.uk/docs/7/EIS%2005.pdf](http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/7/EIS%2005.pdf))

Complaints for helicopter movements can also be directed to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) or the Ministry of Defence (MOD) as follows:

### CAA

Aviation Related Environmental  
Enquiries Directorate of  
Airspace Policy  
K6 G7,  
CAA House  
45-59 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6TE

Tel: 020 7453 6524/5

Email: [aree@caa.co.uk](mailto:aree@caa.co.uk)

### MOD

Ministry of Defence  
Directorate of Air Staff -  
Complaints and Enquiries Unit  
Zone H,  
5th Floor,  
Main Building  
London SW1A 2HB

Tel: 020 7218 6020

Email: [lowflying@mod.gov.uk](mailto:lowflying@mod.gov.uk)

Complaints about Essex Police Helicopter movements should be made by calling: 0300 333 4444

Hertfordshire Police Helicopter complaints should be made by calling: 0845 3300 222

British Helicopter Advisory Board

[www.britishhelicopterassociation.org](http://www.britishhelicopterassociation.org)

## FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like further information, please contact the airport:

- Website: Make an enquiry, view an aircraft track or log a noise complaint:  
[www.stanstedairport.com/noise](http://www.stanstedairport.com/noise)
- By e-mail: [stanstednoiseline@stanstedairport.com](mailto:stanstednoiseline@stanstedairport.com)
- By telephone: **0800 243 788** (answerphone service only)
- By post: Flight Evaluation Unit  
Enterprise House  
London Stansted Airport  
Stansted  
Essex CM24 1QW



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