

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: July 13, 1977

Forwarded to:

Honorable Langhorne M. Bond  
Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
Washington, D. C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-77-51

On May 16, 1977, a New York Airways Sikorsky S61L helicopter overturned during passenger operations on a heliport atop the Pan American Building in New York City. As you know, the accident resulted from a failure of a portion of the right landing gear.

As the helicopter rolled over, the cockpit door, which consists of two sliding panels, slid almost closed and jammed in the door track. In an emergency evacuation situation, the captain must enter the cabin through this door and assist the passengers. However, in this instance, the captain had to leave the cockpit via an emergency exit and reenter the cabin through another door.

Helicopters operated under 14 CFR 127 are not required to have the cockpit door closed and locked as are aircraft operated under 14 CFR 121. Since the door is not usually used in normal operations, the Safety Board believes that it is unnecessary and could become an obstruction between the cockpit and cabin during emergency conditions. This problem is compounded by reports by some helicopter pilots that the cockpit door sticks in the door tracks during normal opening and closing.

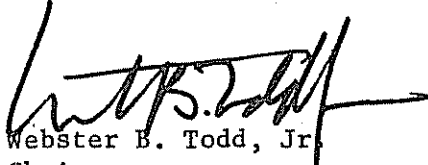
Blocked access from the cockpit to the cabin becomes more serious when the helicopter is operated without a flight attendant. Currently, New York Airways' Operations Specifications allow this operation to be conducted without a flight attendant if fewer than

19 passengers are being transported. Without a flight attendant, clear and rapid crew access to the cabin area is imperative during an emergency. The Safety Board believes that the cockpit door must not be allowed to obstruct the crew or rescuers as it did in this accident.

Accordingly, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Require that the sliding cockpit door on the Sikorsky S61 helicopter be removed or retained open so that it cannot obstruct the entrance from the cockpit to the cabin area. (Class II - Priority Followup) (A-77-51)

TODD, Chairman, BAILEY, Vice Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.

By:   
Webster B. Todd, Jr.  
Chairman