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## AW139 - The Helicopter Of Choice For SAR Missions

As the best selling medium twin turbine engine helicopter in the world with over 350 units on order by approximately 100 customers in nearly 40 countries, the AW139 has become the helicopter of choice in the SAR market and has also had great success in the emergency medical services market. Selected by leading SAR operators worldwide, the AW139 is now in operational service with several customers including the Spanish Marine Safety Agency (Sasemar), the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency and Japan Coast Guard.

In March 2008 the Japan Coast Guard took delivery of its first three AW139 helicopters as the initial phase of a replacement programme for up to 24 helicopters. These helicopters will also operate from Coast Guard ships performing SAR duties. A month later three AW139s provided by CHC Helicopter Corporation entered service with the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency providing 24 hour SAR cover for much of the English Channel from two bases, then in May 2008 Sasemar ordered three additional AW139s bringing the total number ordered up to eight aircraft. Sasemar already have three aircraft in service performing SAR and water pollution detection missions.

In addition to these operators, a number of other customers have placed orders for SAR variants of the AW139 including the Korean Coast Guard, Italian Coast Guard, Estonian Border Guard, and several customers in Africa and the Middle East.

The sole new generation helicopter in its class, the AW139 was designed to perform the most demanding SAR missions and has been described by its operators as the most advanced SAR helicopter in its class in service today. Typical equipment includes a dual rescue hoist for added redundancy, Forward Looking Infra Red (FLIR) camera, nose mounted weather/search radar, emergency flotation system, lightweight cabin mission console, searchlight, loudspeaker system and a four-axis digital automatic flight control system complete with SAR modes and search patterns. A full ice protection system is also under development for the AW139 which will allow the aircraft to fly into known icing conditions, further expanding the operational capabilities of the aircraft in the SAR role. The lightweight mission console in the cabin integrates the data from the sensors on a large colour liquid crystal display, providing the operator with all the data to manage the SAR mission.

The other key features of the AW139 that operators have identified as making it the best helicopter in its class are the cabin space and excellent performance. The AW139 cabin can accommodate up to 15 survivors and large sliding doors provide easy access both on the ground and during hoisting operations.

SAR variants of the AW139 will also benefit from work undertaken by AgustaWestland to certify the AW139 with a Maximum Gross Weight (MGW) of 6,800 kg, enabling the AW139 to target market requirements which today can be met only by larger more expensive helicopter types. The increased MGW option has been developed as a kit that will be available on all new production aircraft as well as for helicopters already in service with no airframe modifications. EASA certification of MGW increase is expected by the end of 2008 with FAA certification soon after.

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