March 19, 2020

Bristow Helicopters outfits three dedicated helicopters for transporting coronavirus cases

Bristow Helicopters has successfully repatriated offshore workers in the oil and gas industry with suspected cases of the novel coronavirus – COVID-19 – using three specially-configured former search and rescue aircraft.

Three suspected COVID-19 cases have been flown from offshore installations in the North Sea since Wednesday, March 18, in one of the dedicated aircraft, introduced to support the industry's response to the pandemic and not for use for general crew change flight activities.

"Bristow is committed to supporting our clients, the oil and gas industry and the region as a whole as we all deal with the impacts of this novel coronavirus," said Alan Corbett, Senior Vice President for Bristow's Europe, Africa, Middle East and Asia area.

"The safety, health and welfare of our workforce, customers and the public we support around the world is of the utmost importance to Bristow, which is why we moved quickly to develop a solution for transporting those suspected of contracting the virus."

Each of the Sikorsky S92 helicopters being deployed has undergone specific modifications to ensure the necessary separation is provided between flight crew, an on-board medic travelling with each flight to provide passenger monitoring support, and passengers with suspected COVID-19.

As the aircraft are purpose fit for a search and rescue role, they have a different seating configuration to crew change helicopters, ensuring appropriate separation can be maintained between those on-board.

Numerous preventive barriers are also installed including protective curtains separating the cockpit from the passenger area and airflow systems, while specific entrance and exit points are provided for each of the flight crew, paramedic and passenger to further ensure required distance is maintained.

Each aircraft undergoes a full decontamination process after every flight, assisted by the rugged waterproof seating and a fully waterproof floor which is included in their search and rescue role configuration.

Bristow is providing significant operational and medical expertise to the UK industry's pandemic steering group, which aims to provide continuous improvement in the options for repatriation of those working offshore – and learnings from the deployment of the UK solution will now inform operations in other regions.

Matt Rhodes, director UK and Turkmenistan Oil & Gas at Bristow Helicopters, said: “The successful introduction of these dedicated aircraft for suspected COVID-19 cases is a key indication of Bristow’s commitment to supporting the energy industry in what are extremely challenging circumstances.

“This service has been established with approval from the CAA, and the support of Oil and Gas UK, our client base and the relevant health authorities – and we remain in continuous dialogue with those organisations.

“Having completed two repatriation flights on behalf of clients in the UKCS, we are pleased to be able to confirm we now have three dedicated aircraft available to companies across the energy sector.

“We are now exploring further options for other parts of the UK, and other industries, as the national response to the coronavirus outbreak gathers pace.”

Click to view high resolution image

Click to view high resolution image

ENDS

For further information contact John Fyall at john.fyall@bristowgroup.com.