

INTROSPECT:

Flight mechanics to become helicopter flight engineers



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What's the status of the new helicopter flight mech Air Force Specialty Code? This question has echoed through the command for years. Unfortunately, the stock answer of "We're working it" has been just as resounding. Finally, after some really hard staff work by our people, the Air Staff has approved AFSC 113XOB for helicopter flight engineers. The change will become effective Oct. 31 when Air Force Regulation 39-1, Airman Classification Regulation, is updated.

The need for this AFSC evolved with the advent of our modern concept of helicopter combat operations. Helicopter systems, equipment, maneuvers and aircrew procedures have become more and more complex and demanding.

Our flight mechanics have been tasked to perform an ever increasing role in these operations. To ensure retainability of highly trained and experienced flight mechanics, a unique AFSC was essential.

We are confident that the reclassification of our flight mechanics into the enlisted aircrew career field will improve our overall management of helicopter flight engineers. The new AFSC will provide valid career development training and skill knowledge testing, assignment flexibility and stability. It will enhance career job security, work conditions and unity of command, especially in our UH-1 units.

For our future needs, a new course of training is being developed that will provide exact training requirements needed to qualify helicopter flight engineers in the H-1, H-3, H-53 and H-X helicopters.

The basic helicopter flight engineer ground course and flight training course will be designed and tailored to provide the exact job knowledge, material and procedures training needed in the performance of helicopter flight engineer duties. The basic ground curriculum will consist of

an introduction to helicopters, aircraft performance and aircraft systems.

On June 4, 1979, senior helicopter flight engineer personnel along with training personnel from Air Force Manpower and Personnel Center and the Air Training Command met at Sheppard AFB, Texas, to establish the ABR 113XOB course chart and the study training standard for the 113XOB AFSC. Also, two 113XOB instructor positions have been authorized at Sheppard Technical Training Center to teach the basic 113XOB course.

Upon completion of the basic course, students will proceed to the 1550th Aircrew Training and Test Wing at Kirtland AFB, N.M., for helicopter aircrew flight training and will graduate from this course with a 11330B AFSC. Training time received at the 1550th will be creditable toward their 5 level OJT required training time.

The flight training course will consist of a combination of the preset H-3/53 dash one, two and three courses, plus the present H-1 51-series qualification training subjects. These courses will be consolidated into Phase I (Qualification) and Phase II (Operational Mission Course).

Instruction in both ground and flight subjects will cover all three aircraft. Flight training will begin on the H-1 and progress through the H-53. Aircrew preflight basic duties, cargo sling, hoist, gunnery and personnel/flare deployment training will be accomplished on each airframe.

Since the procedures for these maneuvers are similar in nature for all helicopters, the ability to perform these functions will improve as the students progress through the course. The basic course will be a one-time training requirement. We're confident that retraining will be drastically reduced due to improved personnel management and increased retainability gained under the new AFSC.

Upon graduation, students will be scheduled to attend the basic aircrew survival course at Fairchild AFB, Wash.,

and water survival training at Homestead AFB, Fla.

Upon arrival at his unit, the flight engineer will receive the necessary in-unit orientation training required for the assigned aircraft/mission. While performing duties on his unit's aircraft, the flight engineer will maintain system familiarity for non-assigned aircraft through the Specialty Training Standard reference and the Career Development Course material made available for career progression and SKT promotion studies.

Upon reassignment to another unit possessing a different model aircraft, a flight engineer will receive 15 to 20 hours of in-unit refresher/retraining and mission familiarization prior to assuming basic aircrew duties. Not only will this procedure reduce training cost, but it will also provide greater worldwide assignment flexibility for helicopter flight engineers.

Assignments for helicopter flight mechanics are currently limited to locations separately designated for the A431XOC and D shredouts. This results in short overseas return for some individuals and long stateside assignments for others. The new AFSC will combine these assignments and place them under one manager at AFMPC. Assignments for helicopter flight engineers will then be equitably distributed across the AFSC, improving assignment stability and flexibility. It will also provide equal operational experience and duty diversification for career advancement by eliminating job stagnation.

We have fought long and hard for this program. The job isn't done yet. The transition from the A431XOC/D to the 113XOB AFSC will not be a simple adjustment. We need the full support of everyone affected by the conversion—including personnel managers, supervisors and commanders—to make it work. In the meantime, we in Rescue salute our helicopter flight engineers. Keep up the good work!