

► Does Your Future Lie In a Private Navy?

Where lies the next big opportunity for helicopter jobs? Perhaps it lies at sea—and we don't mean on offshore oil and gas rigs.

Owners of yachts, and a new category of them called megayachts, are adding helipads to their vessels. Some megayachts have two helipads. But the schools that train crewmembers and captains of such vessels don't offer flight training (though some do offer training for aspiring flight attendants for the luxury rides).

To fill the gap, the French aviation consulting firm Heli Riviera has opened up a unit in the United States to train yacht crews on the safety aspects of helicopter shipboard operations. Based in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Heli Riviera USA has hired a retired U.K. Royal Navy pilot, James Frean, to develop the operation.

Frean said the company has more helipads installed on seagoing luxury vessels, with some having pads on their bows and sterns. "It's a market that's growing," he said. "People need to start taking more interest in the safety aspects."

Heli Riviera, which works with yachts on a consulting basis to design safe helipads, recruit aviation crews and pick out the right aircraft, also offers several safety classes designed for working with onboard helicopters.

Frean said until insurance companies or national coast guard agencies set regulations for safety in this area, no yacht- and helicopter-specific training is required. There is a proposed regulation under consideration by the U.K. Maritime and Coast Guard Agency. 🚁



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