



Toys

FOR YACHTS

The superyacht concept is in a stage of constant change, with the introduction of not only larger vessels but new technologies and thus, new toys. The word "superyacht" no longer encompasses the largest yachts gracing our oceans, for we are now in the age of the megayacht. The sheer size of these allows designers to bring a new edge to the marine experience, with an embarked helicopter now de rigueur on many of the world's most prominent yachts.

The helicopter really *does* open a new dimension to the megayacht experience. Not only is there a fun factor but certainly a convenience factor, a security factor and, in some cases, a life saving factor too. Enhanced facilities further add to the helicopter capabilities, with a hangar to protect the aircraft from the aggressive salt-laden air, and aviation fuel held onboard to improve the helicopter's range and allow flights while the yacht cruises in the farthest reaches of the globe. But putting a helicopter on a yacht is not always plain sailing. In accomplishing this feat, two separate worlds collide in a potential rocky marriage, as maritime meets aviation, each with its own convoluted laws, principles and practices.

When it comes to embarking a helicopter on your yacht, as with most things in life, there are the good, the bad and the ugly, and unfortunately the



difference between the first two categories is not always readily apparent. It is not just rules and regulations that should be regarded when determining this differential, as a balance need also be struck between function and form.

A decent sized deck, free from obstructions and capable of supporting the helicopter even when it lands a little harder than normal, is a good starting point. If helicopters, and pilots for that matter, were 100 percent reliable, the story would end there. However, it would be remiss not to prepare for some "what ifs." One of the greatest challenges in aviation is that a chain of seemingly minor events can lead

to a catastrophic accident – and this can happen in an instant, which is why attention must be paid to the subjects of fire fighting appliances and training for the helideck team.

A superyacht or megayacht's helideck is designed to be used in a variety of ways, from an occasional "touch and go" landing area to a fully-functioning deck carrying an embarked helicopter, and being able to accommodate a helicopter landing at night. There is, however, one thing that they all have in common: the helicopter has to land and take off, the two most hazardous stages of flight. Don't be fooled into thinking that a "touch and go" helipad is a

licence to reduce your safety set up, as this is not the case.

Structures and hardware are an important aspect of a yacht's helicopter setup. Another equally important aspect is the human element. Manpower, procedures, training and currency are all included in this category. In nearly every industry these factors have been proven to swing the balance from disaster to success.

When building a yacht, change in design and function become challenging and expensive once construction is underway. The best defence against modification is thus to start with a good design, which requires a thorough understanding of exactly what it is you wish to achieve. Consultants exist for just about everything, and this includes integrating a helicopter to a superyacht or megayacht. A good consultant will save you time and money, reduce risk and improve functionality – or ideally, all of the above.

For some, a yacht with a helicopter may be considered gilding the lily, but for those who can afford it, this addition is a logical one. With the right choices made, the helicopter becomes an integral part of the way your yacht works, to the point that you will feel lost without it. ⚙️

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