

## Potential threat to aviation posed by Skysails


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IMCA has received two safety alerts – from CHC Helicopter and the European Organisation for Safety of Air Navigation (Eurocontrol) – concerning a recent incident involving a Skysail, an experimental supplement to standard ship propulsion.

### CHC Helicopter Safety Alert

<b>Area:</b> Southern North Sea	<b>Date of Incident:</b> 15 Sep 09
<b>Operation:</b> Oil & Gas	<b>Incident Location:</b> Offshore
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<p><b>Title:</b> Potential Threat to Aviation from Skysails</p> <p><b>Brief Account of Events:</b></p> <p>The aircraft was descending to the operating area in the Dutch offshore sector and identified a large kite/skysail flying at around 1000 ft (just below the clouds) ahead of a vessel.</p> <p>The 'skysail' itself was in the flightpath of the aircraft as it headed towards a nearby installation and, although difficult to see against the cloudy backdrop, was seen to be moving around ahead of the vessel in an erratic manner. The long cable, on which the skysail was extended, was also difficult to see.</p> <p>The vessel can be seen in the picture below with the 'skysail' circled in red. The approximate line of the cable has also been marked on the picture.</p> <p>Details of the vessel, its location and the potential threat to aviation posed by the 'kite' were passed to the local ATC unit and onwards to the Coastguard.</p> <p>The crew advised another nearby platform that the vessel was moving towards their operating area and also informed base operations as soon as possible.</p> <p>Further research has shown that this is one of the first in a line of 'experimental' vessels using 'skysails' to supplement the traditional propulsion units.</p> 	<p><b>Findings:</b></p> <p><b>Root Cause(s) (Preliminary Findings):</b></p> <p>The introduction of new, 'environmentally-friendly' propulsion methods posing a potential threat to aviation.</p> <p><b>CHC's Response:</b></p> <p><b>The following actions must be adhered to:</b></p> <p>The issue has been raised with the Dutch Coastguard and the Regulatory Authorities to allow them to consider the issue in broader terms.</p> <p>Interim solutions will be explored to identify the potential threat posed by this specific vessel when operating under Skysail within the Southern North Sea.</p> <p>For now, all crews are to be aware of the existence of this threat and should report any sightings through the local ATC frequency to allow other aviation assets to be made aware.</p> <p>In addition, events such as those described are to be reported using the CHC Safety &amp; Quality Integrated Database (SQID).</p> <p><b>For absolutely every decision we make, safety must be the first consideration!"</b></p> <p>Sylvain Allard, President and CEO</p>
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This information does not supersede any Company or OEM manual  
Safety Information Only

CHCSA-200X-0X

## Safety Warning Message

- **Safety Subject:** Maritime kite flying incident
  - **Origin:** Aircraft Operator
  - **Date:** 17/09/2009
  - **Distribution:** Aviation Safety Professionals
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### SYNOPSIS

- EUROCONTROL Agency has been informed of an incident that happened on 15 September 2009 over the Southern North Sea:
  - "The aircraft was descending and identified a large kite/skysail flying ahead of the vessel and at around 1000 ft (just below the clouds).  
  
It was attached to the vessel and was in the flight path of the aircraft as it headed towards a nearby installation. The 'skysail' was extended on a long cable and was moving around the vessel in an erratic manner  
  
Further research has shown that this is one of the first in a line of 'experimental' vessels using 'skysails' to supplement the traditional propulsion units."
- The photograph below is an illustrative example of a "skysail":



### YOUR ATTENTION IS REQUIRED

- Aviation Authorities are invited to review their kite flying legislation, rules, applicable constraints and required coordination.
- Aviation Service Providers are invited to note the subject and investigate the relevance in their operational environment.
- Aviation Professionals are invited to share their knowledge and experience about the described issue.

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