

Swiss Rotor Solutions has received EASA certification for its Maximum Pilot View Kit enlarged bubble windows for the Airbus AS350/H125.



Max view bubble kit improves pilot vision

by Matt Thurber

Swiss Rotor Solutions (Booth 7350) has certified its Maximum Pilot View Kit (MPVK), a replacement for the right-side cockpit door in the Airbus AS350/H125 that allows pilots to see a much wider field of view during long-line and other types of challenging utility helicopter

flying. The MPVK received EASA certification on December 21, with the assistance of certification partner GVH Aerospace, which will provide installation and maintenance support. Certification in other countries, including the U.S., Canada and Brazil, is expected to follow

shortly. One of the first helicopters to receive the MPVK is a new H125 equipped with Garmin's G500 display and the Genesis Aerosystems HeliSas autopilot, which is covered in the supplemental type certificate.

The MPVK replaces the AS350's standard door with a

door with a large bubble window that meets at the bottom with a transparent fuselage window fairing mounted into a floor and fuselage insert and frame. The side bubble window in the door provides more space for the pilot's head—including a helmet—particularly when

leaning over to look downward through the lower bubble window, which provides a wide field of view directly below the helicopter. To fill the gap between the floor and the door when a downward field of view is not needed and to protect the lower window from debris, the kit includes a solid cover for the bottom window that fits level with the cockpit floor.

Swiss Rotor Solutions, based in Zweisimmen, Switzerland, claims the composite MPVK will increase vertical visibility below the helicopter by a factor of 10. With the standard floor window, the pilot has a view of about 120 sq m, according to the company, and the MPVK boosts that to 1,200 sq m. Design of the kit was accomplished using finite element modeling and computational fluid dynamics to ensure optimum aerodynamic characteristics.

European helicopter insurance providers are offering discounts of about 15 percent for AS350s/H125s with the kit installed. According to Swiss Rotor Solutions, "The MPVK dramatically improves the capability and safety to perform demanding operations such as sling loading, fire-fighting, SAR/EMS, confined-area operations, aerial survey, seismic, law enforcement and any other tasks performed in close proximity to terrain, obstacles and ground crews or when operating at remote landing sites."

Installation of the MPVK will take between 70 to 150 hours, and kit cost (not including installation) is about \$50,000.

Trent Vick and Robert Fournier receive Appareo Pilot of the Year Award



Robert Fournier

Trent Vick

Here at Heli-Expo 2017 **Trent Vick** and **Robert Fournier** will receive the Appareo Pilot of the Year Award at the Salute to Excellence Awards dinner at the Hilton Anatole Dallas on March 8. The award recognizes active pilots who demonstrate an exceptional act of professionalism. Vick and Fournier are due to receive the award because of their heroic work during the Copper King Fire in Montana during the summer of 2016.

Trent Vick started his helicopter career as a flight instructor in 2008 after viewing a presentation about medical careers that included a fly-in by a helicopter air ambulance in Missoula, Mont. He attended Hillsboro Aero Academy near Portland, Ore., after joining the Air Force to fund his helicopter flight training in 2009. He went on to receive his commercial certificate and earn a position as an S-61 copilot with Helicopter Transport Services (HTS). While flying the S-61, Vick continued to work as a flight instructor at Hillsboro Aero Academy, completing two to four flights a day, flying maneuvers such as autorotations, maximum performance takeoffs,

airport landings, simulated engine failures and more.

Meanwhile, Robert Fournier earned his commercial fixed-wing certificate and attended the helicopter flight training program at Canadore College in North Bay, Ontario (Canada), on a scholarship. He spent five years flying charter assignments in northern Canada, then took a position with HTS in Ontario.

Vick describes Fournier as a "stand-up guy who holds professionalism in the highest regard. He has a great amount of experience in the industry and a lot of time in all sorts of aircraft including both helicopters and commercial fixed-wing operations. There isn't a question you can ask him about his aircraft, or nearly any other, that he doesn't have an answer for. He is a great example of what a true professional pilot should look like."

In the summer of 2016, Fournier and Vick were working out of Plains, Mont., when they were called to tend to the Copper King Fire. Unfortunately, gusty winds up to 50 knots had caused the fire to almost triple in size within 24 hours. With the strong wind and the area's steep terrain, the fire was difficult

to control. Vick, Fournier and their Sikorsky S-64E Sky Crane were called in to transport water from the Clark Fork River near Thompson Falls to the fire.

Vick recalled the anxiety he felt while driving from Plains to Thompson Falls along Highway 200. Although it was dark, the active flames lit up the area as they grew closer to the houses near the highway. Vick understood the responsibility he and Fournier had; to calm the fire and keep the locals safe.

While on one of their numerous water runs, Vick and Fournier spotted a young boy named Weston excitedly waving at them. The boy was interested in the helicopter because his father was a firefighter also working on the Copper King Fire. Vick said the two men waved back a few times but it was Fournier who suggested they stop by to give the boy a hat or some stickers.

Vick explained, "A lot of helicopter pilots start flying because it's their dream to fly. I was inspired when I was younger by a helicopter pilot who flew in at a medical presentation and talked about his role as an EMS pilot. We just thought it would be very cool to go talk to someone who shared the same passion as us. I had also been away from my family for the whole summer, and seeing Weston on the bank reminded me a lot of my own son here in Portland. So it was a brief break from life on the road to go share our passion with a young boy."

With the help of these two pilots as well as firefighters and other volunteers, containment of the Copper King Fire grew to 70 percent by September 2016. Focused on helping those in need, Vick never imagined that his work on this project would lead toward the Pilot of the Year Award.

"My goal now is to try to be the best at what I do year in and year out," he said. "I hope that I can use this award as motivation to become an expert in my field. I have a very long way to go before that happens, but I feel like I will be holding myself to the highest standards possible. It's also an honor to share this award with Mr. Fournier." —S.C.