
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO SHARE INFORMATION
ON THE SAFETY AND PERFORMANCE OF HELICOPTER AND AIR TOUR
OPERATORS TO HELP RESIDENTS AND VISITORS MAKE INFORMED
DECISIONS.

1 WHEREAS, general aviation and commercial helicopter flights
2 are sometimes used by local residents and businesses for
3 commercial purposes, and are popular activities tourists
4 throughout Hawaii; and

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6 WHEREAS, numerous general aviation and tour operators
7 provide commercial air tour flights throughout the islands,
8 including numerous companies often operating on a single island;
9 and

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11 WHEREAS, not all tour operators employ the same levels of
12 safety precautions and best practices when flying customers, or
13 maintain their helicopters and vehicles with the same degree of
14 care, which have been contributing factors in fatal crashes; and

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16 WHEREAS, pilots at some companies have reported being
17 pressured to continue flying at times and in conditions when
18 they felt it was potentially unsafe or inappropriate to fly; and

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20 WHEREAS, since 2000, there have been over forty helicopter
21 tour crashes and incidents in Hawaii, resulting in approximately
22 fifty fatalities and nearly as many other serious injuries; and

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24 WHEREAS, commercial air tour operators on Kauai recorded
25 the highest number of fatalities with nearly thirty deaths as a
26 result of helicopter crashes; and

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28 WHEREAS, general aviation and commercial helicopter flights
29 over residential areas can create safety hazards, such as the



1 2019 crash of a tour helicopter on a street in Kailua, Oahu that
2 resulted in three deaths, and could have killed dozens more had
3 it struck a busy area; and

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5 WHEREAS, the risk of crashes, fatalities, and injuries to
6 helicopter and tour pilots and their customers is significantly
7 increased in the absence of currently available safety
8 mechanisms, devices, and best practices; and

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10 WHEREAS, following the 2019 crash in Kailua, the Chair of
11 the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) stated that
12 "each crash underscores the urgency of improving the safety of
13 charter flights by implementing existing [board] safety
14 recommendations," and called for small aircraft flight safety
15 improvements; and

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17 WHEREAS, NTSB has made repeated recommendations for safety
18 enhancements in the helicopter tour and charter industry,
19 including the use of crash-resistant fuel systems, flotation
20 devices for flights over water, and terrain awareness and
21 warning systems to reduce the risk of controlled flight into
22 terrain; and

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24 WHEREAS, the implementation of safety measures such as
25 crash-resistant fuel tanks can significantly reduce the risk of
26 post-crash fires, a factor that has contributed to fatalities in
27 multiple aviation crashes; and

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29 WHEREAS, helicopters operating in the State frequently fly
30 over the ocean and remote terrain where emergency landings may
31 be required, and the presence of emergency flotation devices are
32 a critical factor in survivability in the event of an unplanned
33 water landing; and

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35 WHEREAS, radar and terrain awareness technology have proven
36 effective in enhancing pilot situational awareness and reducing
37 the likelihood of accidents caused by poor visibility, weather
38 conditions, or pilot disorientation; and

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40 WHEREAS, many companies currently hold minimal insurance
41 policies that may not be sufficient to cover injuries or worse
42 in the event of a crash; and



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WHEREAS, ensuring public access to safety-related information regarding the presence or absence of flotation devices, radar technology, and crash-resistant fuel tanks in helicopters used for commercial and general aviation flights, as well as applicable levels of insurance coverage would empower consumers and the public to make better informed decisions regarding their safety and help save lives; and

WHEREAS, increased transparency in the aviation industry would encourage helicopter tour operators and charter companies to adopt best practices in aviation safety, thereby reducing risks to passengers, crew, and the public at large; and

WHEREAS, providing detailed safety information aligns with broader efforts to enhance consumer protections and uphold the State's commitment to safeguarding its residents and visitors from avoidable risks; and

WHEREAS, providing residents and visitors with safety and performance related information will enable them to make informed decisions; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2025, the House of Representatives concurring, that the Department of Transportation is requested to share information on the safety and performance of helicopter and air tour operators to help residents and visitors make informed decisions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Transportation is requested to solicit information no less than annually from commercial air tour operators on whether their helicopters are equipped with, and what percentage of their helicopters are equipped with:

- (1) Crash resistant fuel systems;
- (2) Flotation devices in the event of a water landing;
- (3) Terrain awareness and warning systems; and



1 (4) Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast technology;
2 and

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4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of
5 Transportation is requested to solicit information from
6 commercial air tour operators on whether their companies are
7 operating with best practices including information regarding:

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9 (1) Minimum pilot hours required to fly commercial
10 passengers; and

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12 (2) The amount of insurance coverage provided to cover
13 personal injury and loss for each customer in the
14 event of harm; and

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16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of
17 Transportation is requested to identify and share with the
18 public the numbers of legitimate complaints about safety, noise,
19 or operations received by the Department of Transportation or
20 any other appropriate departments or agencies about each
21 commercial air tour operator operating in the State, and any
22 other relevant safety or operational information as may be
23 appropriate; and

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25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of
26 Transportation is requested to identify and share with the
27 public the numbers of legitimate safety-related incidents
28 experienced by each commercial air tour operator over the
29 preceding twenty-four months; and

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31 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of
32 Transportation is requested to collaborate with the NTSB to
33 identify and develop any other safety criteria that may be
34 appropriate to be shared with the public; and

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36 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of
37 Transportation is requested to establish a system of scoring and
38 transparency for these collected criteria to provide the public
39 with information in a format easy to visualize and understand,
40 that enables a resident or visitor to know whether or not a
41 commercial air tour company has incorporated the particular



1 criteria, and what threshold or amount of criteria that company
2 has incorporated, where appropriate; and

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4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED in establishing the system of
5 scoring and transparency, that the Department of Transportation
6 is requested to also assign an easy to understand overall score
7 or letter grade for each commercial air tour operator that
8 clearly distinguishes those commercial air tour operators that
9 employ more or higher levels of safety and other relevant
10 criteria than those that do not; and

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12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of
13 Transportation is requested to identify the very highest scoring
14 commercial air tour operator each year and recognize and
15 categorize that commercial air tour operator as the "Safest
16 Commercial Air Tour Operator" and categorize commercial air tour
17 operators who did not provide a response with safety information
18 as "Safety Unknown"; and

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20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of
21 Transportation is requested to provide this information to the
22 public in an online place and format that is easy and simple to
23 find and understand, and keep it updated; and

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25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of
26 Transportation is requested to share this information with the
27 Hawaii Tourism Authority, who is requested to also provide this
28 information to visitors in an online format that is easy and
29 simple to find and understand, and keep it updated; and

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31 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of
32 Transportation is requested to submit an annual report to the
33 Legislature summarizing specific safety-related information for
34 each general aviation and commercial tour operator in the State
35 and post an electronic copy of each report on the Department of
36 Transportation's website; and

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38 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
39 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the
40 National Transportation Safety Board, Director of
41 Transportation, and Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the
42 Hawaii Tourism Authority.

