



vertiflite Commentary

AHS International is the Forum for Vertical Flight

By Mike Hirschberg, Executive Director

Since the American Helicopter Society was founded 70 years ago, the Annual Forum has provided an unequalled opportunity for government, industry and academia to work together to tackle the toughest challenges in vertical flight.

At this year's 69th Annual Forum and Technology Display, we as a Society faced the added challenge of severe budgetary constraints, but our members prevailed to execute a dynamic, informative and wide-ranging program. Forum 69 also clarified challenges that the rotorcraft industry faces in the near term. These include ongoing safety and noise concerns that undermine the public's perception of our industry and, consequently, political and governmental support and funding for initiatives to advance vertical flight.

The success of this year's Forum reinforced the fact that the key to our Society's success is you, our members. Members like you pulled together a technical program on par with the best Forums of the past. They developed new panels that explored such topics as the critical role of suppliers in our industry's success and how we can better meet the technological requirements of civil

helicopter operators. Our members sometimes had to go to extraordinary lengths to present at – or even to attend – the Forum. We thank all of our members who gave of their time to make the Forum so successful. Their dedication and hard work remind us that only through the greater involvement of individual members like you and your colleagues can we



meet the challenges ahead, as we have resolved the challenges behind us.

This year's Forum surpassed all expectations and demonstrated that we all are committed to continuing this important tradition of providing a forum for the exchange of technical information. The current U.S. budget impasse and draconian travel restrictions by the U.S. Department of Defense have caused other

organizations to cancel events or suffer attendance 50% below that of previous years. In contrast, Forum 69 was down only about 8%. It drew 1,100 attendees from 18 countries, as well as cutting-edge exhibits from more than 60 companies as part of the Technology Display. Some 40 special session presentations augmented the briefings of more than 225 technical papers on the latest vertical flight research and innovations.

During the Grand Awards Banquet, the Society honored rotorcraft leaders, presenting more than a dozen awards and six fellowships for technological and industry advancements. In addition, \$50,000 in scholarships were presented to 21 of the world's most talented and deserving engineering students as part of this year's Vertical Flight Foundation (VFF) scholarship program.

But AHS isn't just the Forum. We are more than just a single event at a single location. We are global and we are active and engaged all year round.

AHS International has more than 6,000 members, including 1,300 outside the U.S., and we have been growing steadily. We now have two dozen active chapters in North

America, Europe, Asia and Australia – with new chapters being activated around the world – as well as a dozen student chapters, 28 educational members and 75 corporate members.

The Society organizes or co-sponsors six to eight Specialists' Meetings a year in the U.S. and around the world. Local chapters have regular meetings – presentations over lunch or dinner, tours and outings – to provide forums for technical discussions and opportunities for networking.

AHS International is also helping to train the next generation of vertical flight leaders. The Annual Student Design Competition – now completing its 30th year – invites engineering students from schools all over the world to design advanced rotorcraft. With this and our VFF scholarships, the AHS Igor I. Sikorsky Human Powered Helicopter Competition and the Micro Air Vehicle Student Challenge, we have made great strides in connecting with students interested in rotorcraft across the globe. Now, we are adding

pre-college outreach, building on the U.S. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) initiative to get more secondary school children interested in the excitement and challenges that vertical flight has to offer.

AHS also works to effect change to advance vertical flight technology and create recognition of the benefits that rotorcraft bring to society. In the U.S., we lead advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill and with the Pentagon, FAA and the public, and we work with organizations in other countries to advocate for the future of vertical flight abroad.

In 2005, AHS International initiated the International Helicopter Safety Team (IHST) to reduce helicopter accidents around the world. Now, we are looking at a new initiative to address public concerns about helicopter noise.

Our vision is to provide global leadership for scientific, technical, educational and legislative initiatives that advance the state of the art of vertical flight. Though this is most

readily apparent at the Annual Forum, we strive to deliver this every day.

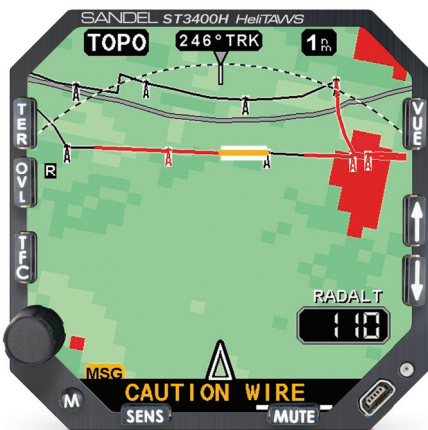
As you can see, AHS has a lot of exciting initiatives underway and in the works. But we rely on our member volunteers to carry forward our initiatives. Support AHS – locally, nationally, internationally – so we can support you.

Get involved in your local chapter. If there isn't one near you, work with your colleagues to start a new one. Foster the exchange of ideas by organizing local events and technical presentations; this in turn will draw more people into our network of professionals. Help recruit members. Nurture our industry's newest professionals and encourage the next generation to consider careers in rotorcraft.

AHS International works to advance the state of the art of vertical flight. Be an active part of AHS to help us make it happen!



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