



Helicopter wake turbulence

Following a fatal incident in which a coastal-flying paraglider was downed by a helicopter landing on an adjacent beach, the BEA (French equivalent of the UK's AAIB) conducted an investigation into helicopter wake turbulence. Their findings are summed up in a short video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHqN7PQraMs. This is well worth watching. The BEA conclude that the wake turbulence of a helicopter is greater than that of a fixed-wing aircraft of similar

weight, and that turbulence generated by the largest helicopters can be similar to that of commercial aircraft. There is currently only limited research into this subject, however Steve Blackler's excellent *How scared should you be?* article (Skywings May 2014) covers much of the same ground. The bottom line is this: on sighting an airborne helicopter you should attempt to gain the maximum possible separation from areas below, behind and downwind of it – or land.