



New Zealand RC Helicopter Pilots Guide

● Introduction

RC Helicopters are an amazingly challenging but immensely rewarding Hobby to get into. Helicopters are small technical marvels that continue to challenge long after you have mastered basic flight skills. Building and setting up a new RC Helicopter is a fun and challenging process. Many models have Build Videos available for them that will assist you on your first build. These along with the help and advice of an experienced mentor pilot will ensure your success in the Hobby.

Once you can fly you will be constantly challenged, whether you get into the Scale (making a Heli look like its Fullsize counterpart) aspects or learn to fly aerobatics, you will certainly never get bored. There are Nitro, Electric, Gasoline and even Turbine (\$\$) powered RC Helicopters available and you should expect to spend around \$1000 - \$3000 to get into the Hobby initially. This will get you a quality kit/airframe, basic running and radio gear along with basic field support gear. Buying secondhand is certainly an option but you should get advice prior to the purchase from an experienced pilot to ensure you are buying a good (modern, supported etc.) model at a good price.

RC Helicopters are now more accessible than ever before. There are several reasons for this. First is the fact that prices have come down dramatically over the last 10 years or so (more competitors in the field and more people in the Hobby, creating economies of scale). This has lowered the barrier of entry for a lot of pilots. The other major factor has been the advent of PC based RC Flight Simulators. These allow you to plug your transmitter into the USB Port of your computer and do flight training with the radio you use at the field. The physics and scenery of modern Simulator programs are very accurate and realistic and they are used by beginners and experts alike. A Simulator will allow you to develop the muscle memory required for all of the basics and then they will also allow you to perfect all future maneuvers risk free before attempting them for real at the field. This cuts down learning time and cost dramatically and a Simulator can be used long before you own your first Helicopter. In fact, that is encouraged so that you can determine if the Hobby is really for you before you make the initial financial outlay.

Support for RC Helicopters in NZ has also grown dramatically in the last few years. In years past, most Pilots imported their own gear into NZ. Not so any more. Whilst some pilots import select items themselves, there are now many local Hobby Shops that sell and support Helicopters both retail and online. This is great for the new pilot needing local support and advice as well as having ready access to those all important spares in case of a crash.

● Crashes

Sadly they happen to all Pilots. They are an inevitable part of the learning process and even skilled Pilots can crash due to pilot error or mechanical failure. One good aspect of RC Helicopters however is that unlike RC Airplanes, a Heli crash is rarely a write off. There are common crash damaged items but Helis tend to handle crashes fairly well and can be repaired to new condition using locally sourced parts. Crashes needn't be common however. With good attention to detail, good pre/post flight checks, quality gear and with the Pilot

staying near his comfort zone, crashes should be the exception, not the rule.

- **Safety**

RC Helicopters are NOT toys. They can and WILL kill you if you do not respect them. With many Helis having 600mm+ Carbon Fiber rotor blades and a rotor RPM of around 2000, the blades become spinning knives. 3D aerobatics, often done low to the ground or 'down on the deck' and close to the pilot cause the risk level to be even greater.

We always recommend that you practice all maneuvers with an acceptable safety margin built in, especially where others such as spectators are present. This hobby is largely self regulated in New Zealand and we'd like to keep it that way. If you choose to take your own life in your hands that is your choice, just allow others the chance to make this same choice.

- **Governance**

The NZMAA governs all Aeromodeling in New Zealand. You will want to join the NZMAA for insurance coverage and for attending flying events in NZ. They are located here:
<http://nzmaa.org.nz/apps/main.asp>

The NZMAA also has SIG's (Special Interest Groups) for each flying discipline and these SIG's are volunteer Committee's that help to manage and promote that discipline in NZ. The current Heli SIG President is Jason Greenwood and he can be contacted at:
jason@3dheli.co.nz or 021-843-160 if you have any queries not addressed by this document. He can also help put you in contact with Pilots in your area who can help you get into the hobby.

Your NZMAA dues are paid via your Flying Club. You can find a local NZMAA affiliated flying club here:
http://www.nzmaa.org.nz/apps/clubs_arealist.asp.html

Either visit your local Club or send them an email and let them know that you are a new Heli pilot and want to join the Club. They will give you the yearly fee (around \$100) and once you have paid it, that covers NZMAA and Club Fees for a year. Also tell them you are a first time member of the NZMAA and they will make sure that you get your NZMAA Membership Card too. From then on out, once your yearly subs are paid you just get a renewal sticker to go on your card. Your insurance is provided under the NZMAA umbrella policy so no extra costs there.

Getting your NZMAA 'Wings' Badge (competence program) for Helis is quite important and once you are a bit more experienced your Club will set you up with a Wings Tester so you can get certified. NZMAA Wings info is found here:
<http://www.nzmaa.org.nz/manuals/Wings.pdf>

Other useful NZMAA Documentation is found here:
<http://www.nzmaa.org.nz/documents.asp.html>

- **Forums/Other Sources of Info**

Many NZ Pilots hang out on the RunRyder Heli Forum NZ thread here:
<http://www.runryder.com/helicopter/t293054>
(just click to go to the last page to see the most recent posts). Get signed up on RR and subscribe to the thread to be kept in the loop.

Another good forum is:
<http://www.helifreak.com/forumdisplay.php?f=13>
and there are a LOT of good build and setup educational videos from Finless Bob here:

<http://www.helifreak.com/forumdisplay.php?f=60>

- **Events**

There are competitions and fly-ins held throughout the year in NZ. Most NZ Heli events are listed here:

<http://rachelisnz.eaccounts.co.nz/events.htm>

as the dates become known.

There is also a lot of NZ specific Heli info on the site here:

<http://3dheli.co.nz/content/>

that might be of use to you.

- **Pilot Training**

Unlike some other Hobbies, it is almost a requirement that you pair up with a mentor early on to help you into the Hobby. The learning curve is very steep and it is easy to become frustrated with the volume of information you will need to take in and retain. We want people to enjoy the Hobby and stay in it for the long term but sadly we often see people try and go it alone (it is the Kiwi way) and then within a few months (and usually a few crashes later) they disappear never to be seen again. With the proper help and guidance, the learning process is smoothed out and you can focus on the things that matter most. It will almost invariably save you money too.

A good Mentor will help you determine a good first Heli/Equipment for your needs and also help you get it built and setup properly for its first Maiden flight. They will usually flight trim it for you before they hand you the controls as well. There is special 'Training Gear' that should be attached to your Heli Skids when you are first learning. This helps to prevent crashing early on by helping prevent the Heli tipping over on the ground during the initial Hover practice stage.

Simon Lockington's (expat Kiwi) Site is a great source of info:

<http://www.littlerotors.com/>

and his flying lessons:

<http://www.littlerotors.com/flyinglessons/index.aspx>

are a good guide to flight skill progression goals.

Buddy Boxing is available in the Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch regions (more to come). You need to arrange a time with the relevant person to use the Heli. Buddy Boxing allows you to fly with relatively low risk. It involves 2 Transmitters being hooked together with one as Master and one as Slave. The trainer Pilot can instantly take control at the flick of a switch if you get into trouble as his Radio is the Master. Buddy Boxing is generally free with the trainee covering fuel costs only.

Contact Details for Pilots that organise Buddy Boxing are as follows:

Auckland

Jason Greenwood

Email: jason@3dheli.co.nz

Phone: 021-843-160

Hamilton

Kevin Foote

Email: kevin@hobbyhangar.co.nz

Phone: 021-756-663

Wellington

David Bettany

Email: davidbettany@mac.com

Phone: 021-609-505

Christchurch

Kevin Crawford

Email: k.crawford@xtra.co.nz

Phone: 0272417601

● Conclusion

Everyone needs a Hobby. Hobbies provide challenge, stimulation, camaraderie, relaxation, escape and sanity in an increasingly insane world. Flying RC Helicopters is usually done outdoors and many NZMAA Clubs are based on rural farmland providing a relaxing backdrop for your flying. Generally you will find RC helicopter Pilots to be of above average intelligence with a friendliness and willingness to help that is very re-assuring when you are starting out.

Ask anyone who has been in the Hobby for long and they will almost universally tell you how addictive the Hobby is. Many of us have given up other Hobbies to focus exclusively on helicopters and some of us have even made it our life's work. When being assisted by more experienced Pilots all we ask is that you are genuine in your interest and commitment to safety and learning. RC Helicopters aren't for everyone but they are certainly one of the best options out there for those that are technically minded and enjoy the marvels of flight.

Welcome to the addiction!!