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FROM THE EDITOR



By **Glen White**

Over the years the helicopter industry has proven to be an invaluable asset to the communities in which they serve. Whether it is picking up an injured motorist on the highway, fighting a wildfire that is encroaching on a neighborhood or acting in a law enforcement role the helicopter has become a key asset in the fiber of our modern society.

Though the benefits of the helicopter are apparent to most it seems that the industry we work in is under continual attack by various groups trying to curtail our operations. Whether it is taking off from an airport or simply flying through the sky there are people who are adamant about eliminating rotary-wing flight.

Trying to understand the illogical thought patterns of people for the most part is a futile endeavor. Though all rational arguments would show a hypocritical or flawed thread in their reasoning, the purveyor of the faulty mindset will stick to it as if it were the core belief to their existence. To engage in a senseless attempt to repair their reasoning only feeds their notion that their stance is a valid one.

Whether it is a mentally maladjusted person looking for some attention or someone looking for a cause to find personal validation in the vast majority of these cases is an individual with issues. If those groups weren't enough to contend with there are groups with misconceptions of rotary-wing operations, people with opportunities to make money off the situation, people who made poor choices in home purchases and good people with valid complaints.

For the most part when addressing the various groups attempting to rid or limit helicopter operations in a particular area the above statements prove to be all too true. Attempts are continually made to appease and work with these organizations but much like the camels nose in the tent, there never seems to be an end to their issues. For the vast majority of the crusades to vilify our industry the stance they choose to take is using the "noise" or "safety" cards.

These two catch phrases are acceptable to the public pallet and can be used with very little need for justification or reason in logic. The "noise" generated by helicopters has been blamed for causing everything from heart palpitations to severe headaches. Even though the decibels that are generated by a helicopter is less than a lawn mower, weed whacker or truck driving by some folks are fixated on rotorwing noise.

If the true source of the complaint were the decibels of sound generated by a helicopter, and the decibels of other objects created a higher level of "noise," then it would stand to reason that complaints would also be generated for the louder sources of "noise." In 2008 Harris Miller Miller & Hanson Inc. conducted a noise study in the area of the Mission Bay Hospital Complex in San Francisco, CA. They found that the noise generated by the city environment was louder than that of the helicopters operating in the area. But yet people still complained about the helicopter "noise."

Airports that have little justification to limit helicopter operations generally use the "safety" card to curtail our ability to land or takeoff within the airport property. These airports attempt to pronounce what operations are safe is but it is important to know that only the FAA can determine if an aviation activity is safe or not. As stated in FAA Order 5190.6B, Chapter 14, "The FAA, not the sponsor, is the authority to approve or disapprove aeronautical restrictions based on safety and/or efficiency at federally obligated airports."

A recent example of an airport over stepping its authority is occurring at the Norwood Municipal Airport in Norwood, Massachusetts. Like many such