MARENCO SWISSHELICOPTER FLIES SECOND SKYE PROTOTYPE

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Marenco Swisshelicopter's second flight-test SKYe SH09 prototype, dubbed P2, made its maiden flight today from the company's headquarters at Mollis Airport in Switzerland. The helicopter took off at 5:24 p.m. local time with chief test pilot Richard Trueman at the controls and flight-test engineer Peter Wittwer analyzing real-time data.

"This first flight of the second prototype of the SKYe SH09 was a total success, all the test objectives were easily achieved and the aircraft performed extremely well," Trueman said shortly after the flight. "The crisp handling qualities combined with the ergonomic and intuitive cockpit features made [it] a pleasure to operate."

P2, which is now the main test vehicle, has been fitted with a new rotor head and blades intended to reduce vibration and complexity on the rotor head, while enhancing "tolerance to future upgrades." The initial flight verified the lower vibration and noise levels, Marenco said.

The first phase of test flights for P2 is now under way, with the initial trials covering hover flights at low altitudes before moving on to hover flights outside ground effect. This will be followed by trials

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confirming systems behavior and avionics accuracy, flying limited autorotations and initial performance and stability trials. After that, testing will move on to handling, load survey and exploring the helicopter's full height velocity curves, to confirm the safe combinations of altitude and airspeed during autorotating landings.

Meanwhile, the company is building P3, the first conforming prototype, and expects to set up its production line for the SKYe later this year. EASA certification of the all-composite helicopter, initially planned for the second half of this year, has slipped to next year, with FAA validation to follow in 2018.

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