

# **Bell Helicopter** **TEXTRON**

A Subsidiary of Textron, Inc.

January 13, 2003

## **INFORMATION LETTER 407-03-68**

**TO: All Owners/Operators of Bell 407 series Helicopters**

**SUBJECT: BELL 407 MAST – INCIDENT REPORT**

This Information Letter is issued to advise of an unusual incident and to stress the importance of adhering to the published Bell 407 maintenance procedures.

On 9 January 2003, a Bell 407 was flying in the Gulf of Mexico when the pilot heard a noise, detected a vibration, and returned to his base for an investigation. Visual inspection found a crack indication in the mast pole below the swashplate drive hub and above the swashplate boot. The crack extended circumferentially around approximately 40% of the mast outer diameter. This is the first reported occurrence of this nature since Bell 407 deliveries began in January 1996.

While the cause of the crack has not yet been determined, preliminary investigation reveals that the mast pole had been painted in the cracked area and that corrosion was also visible. In view of the above the following points are stressed:

- As noted in the CR&O manual the mast pole is not to be painted in that area;
- Routine inspection is necessary to detect and remedy any sign of corrosion during daily checks and scheduled inspections.

The Bell 407 comprises approximately 545 aircraft and has accumulated close to 800,000 flight hours. Bell Helicopter has given this investigation the highest priority and operators will be informed of the results and further action if any, as soon as possible.