

Summer boost for HM Coastguard Search and Rescue helicopters

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HM Coastguard has opened two new Search and Rescue (SAR) helicopter bases to support the emergency service's search and rescue response over the summer months.

Two AgustaWestland AW189 rescue helicopters will operate from the new bases at Oban and Carlisle with an ability to be airborne within 15 minutes of being tasked between the hours of 9am and 9pm, April to September.

Based at Carlisle Lake District Airport, Carlisle's opening over the Easter weekend, pictured above, follows the successful launch of a sister seasonal base at Oban Airport in West Scotland on 15 March. Both include a modern Search and Rescue Hangar, operational planning room, offices, and rest areas for crews.

This enhanced Search and Rescue provision is part of the UK's Second Generation Search and Rescue Aviation Programme (UKSAR2G). This £1.6billion modernisation programme used historic data to identify areas of peak demand for Search and Rescue driven primarily by accidents during outdoor leisure activities.

These bases provide an additional two search and rescue helicopters into the fleet during the busiest periods of the year and have been located where historical tasking data showed the greatest need. This will benefit those in need by cutting down transit times to areas of high demand and providing additional capacity into the fleet.

Senior Responsible Owner for the programme Mark Bradley said:

The UKSAR2G programme has been informed by operational data gathered through HM Coastguard's incident response over several years. This looks at the seasonality and frequency of incidents, together with where and when these occur, to ensure that our network has an enhanced capability in areas of high demand.

As well as the rollout of new state-of-the-art AW139 aircraft across several of HM Coastguard's 10 existing permanent bases, the programme has launched seasonal bases at Oban and Carlisle to support the busier summer months.

Chief Coastguard Paddy O'Callaghan said:

HM Coastguard is a modern frontline emergency service that continues to be equipped and ready to respond when it's needed the most.

The UKSAR2G programme brings a wealth of enhancements to HM Coastguard's national Search and Rescue provision, and our new aircraft and seasonal bases underline the service's longstanding commitment to saving lives. We'd encourage people to enjoy the summer safely, including when they are visiting the coast. However, experience tells us that things can sometimes go wrong. That's why we urge the public

to remain alert to coastal hazards like tidal cutoffs, cliff falls, and mud.

This also includes checking the weather and tide times before heading out and considering that even in summer, UK waters can be cold, and entering unprepared can be dangerous.

If you or others are in trouble at sea or on the coast, call 999 and ask for the Coastguard.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/summer-boost-for-hm-coastguard-search-and-rescue-helicopters>