

## ■ PRODUCTS | UPGRADES

### Bell to Install BLR FastFin on New 412s



Bell Helicopter has announced its intent to install BLR Aerospace's FastFin tail rotor enhancement and stability system as standard equipment on new Bell 412s. This OEM "endorsement," coupled with the Federal Aviation Administration's recent certification of its Bell 412 FastFin system, has officials at BLR Aerospace busy.

"We are proud to be part of the Bell Helicopter team and contributing to such a world-renowned platform, Dave Marone, vice president of sales and marketing for BLR. "We consider this a game-changing event for BLR's, FastFin technology, and for the Bell 412 operating community."

In addition to installation on new Bell 412 EPs, which will begin immediately as factory-installed modifications, BLR is accepting orders from the entire Bell 412 fielded fleet. Marone says the company is tooling up to have the Bell facility in Mirabel, Canada ready for installations. BLR is also preparing for individual orders from legacy 412 operators on a first come, first served basis.

BLR approached Bell Helicopter several years ago and did a proof-of-concept test flight in a Bell-provided 412 conducted by a Bell test pilot. The concept was proven at that time. Even-

tually, BLR and Bell collaborated in gaining the STC and PMA approval.

Key to that effort, according to Marone, was Bell's Organization Designation Authorization (ODA) status. The ODA status gives more autonomy and efficiency to the OEM, essentially giving "bolt-on bandwidth" to the FAA, says Marone.

He added this was a cost-effective way to get the STC approved. BLR praised the Bell team for their cooperation and efficiency.

Certified performance data show a range of improvements for Bell 412 helicopters. Most operators using the FastFin system will realize at least a 275-pound increase in useful load, plus significant safety, stability and wind azimuth benefits.

Additionally, for many who fly 400 hours annually, the system can pay for itself in one to two years, depending on operating altitudes, according to BLR. Some operators may realize up to a 1,250-pound increase in useful load when flying at 5,000 feet on a hot day. "The reality is many 412 operators will receive more than 1,000-pound increase," Marone says. "The other benefit is an increase in velocity of wind tolerated of between five and 15 knots." FastFin is "a mission-critical

enhancement that improves operations in an immediate and measurable way," adds Marone.

Installation of the FastFin tail rotor enhancement and stability system kit involves modifying a helicopter tailboom with two parallel strips (known as dual tailboom strakes), and reshaping the vertical fin to optimize airflow around the tailboom. These simple changes deliver a range of important benefits to operators who fly the modified aircraft.

FastFin is already available for Bell 204, 205, 212, Huey II, and most UH-1 derivatives as an aftermarket upgrade.

"No matter the mission, today's operators are looking for every competitive advantage," Marone said. "Our technology expands the envelope and helps operators achieve maximum return on their capital investments." Marone explained that operators in any field could see quick ROI on the installation cost. ✈

## ■ PUBLIC SERVICE | REGS

### FAA Updates Night Vision MMEL

The Federal Aviation Administration has issued a global revision to MMEL (master minimum equipment list) Policy Letter 127, which focuses on night vision imaging systems (NVIS), including night vision goggles (NVGs). According to FAA, around 40 percent of HEMS operators are equipped with NVIS through STC installations. Helicopters currently equipped with NVIS lighting are grounded when repairs are needed. The agency determined that "an acceptable level of safety is maintained for unaided (non-NVG) NVIS operations, not to exceed 10 days provided the defective NVIS lighting does not interfere with the pilot's ability to see instruments, instrument markings, switch position and frequency settings, and annunciations." The global policy change allows helicopters with defective NVIS lighting to "operate using MMEL relief day or night operations in VFR, IFR, as long as NVGs are not used." ✈