

DGCA grants approval for Chardham Yatra helicopter services after Monsoon break

Recommencement of chopper services with enhanced safety measures to ensure safe and seamless operation

Civil Aviation Minister Rammohan Naidu and Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami held multiple meetings to ensure close coordination between DGCA, AAI and Uttarakhand Civil Aviation Development Authority

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Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has granted approval of recommencement of helicopter operations for the Chardham Yatra 2025 *w.e.f.* 15/16 September 2025 after the monsoon break.

Strategic initiatives for enhancing the safety of Char Dham operations have been implemented after a rigorous scrutiny under the leadership of Civil Aviation Minister Rammohan Naidu. With a clear mandate of zero tolerance for any lapses in safety, the DGCA has been instructed to adopt strict measures and ensure safe operations.

Minister Rammohan Naidu also held multiple review meetings alongside Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, Shri Pushkar Singh Dhami, at Dehradun and Delhi to ensure close coordination between the DGCA, AAI, State Government and Uttarakhand Civil Aviation Development Authority (UCADA).

As per the directives of the Minister, the DGCA also carried out comprehensive inspection/audit of all Helipads, helicopters, Operators preparedness and support facilities by DGCA team from 13-16 September 2025. Post that the approval for recommencement of helicopter operations has been granted to UCADA and Helicopter Operators.

Additionally, all participating Helicopter Operators and Pilots were briefed by DGCA on Challenges involved, Additional Safety measures adopted in Operations Circular for Conduct of Helicopter Pilgrimage Operations.

The two components of Chardham Yatra by Helicopters is Charter Services from Dehradun (Sahstradhara) to Yamunotri/Gangotri/Kedarnath/Badrinath and Shuttle Services to Shri Kedarnath Ji Helipad from Guptkashi/Phata/Sitapur cluster. A total of six Helicopter operators would be undertaking Shuttle operations from Guptkashi/ Phata/ Sitapur Cluster and Seven Operators/Consortiums would be undertaking Charter Flying Operations from Dehradun (Sahastradhara).

Recognising the critical role of helicopter services in facilitating pilgrim movement to the shrines located in high-altitude and remote areas of Uttarakhand, the DGCA has put in place enhanced safety measures to ensure safe and seamless operations. The DGCA will be closely monitoring and maintaining constant vigil for the Chardham Yatra Helicopter Operations. Following spate of Helicopter accidents in Chardham Sector in May-June 2025, various High-Powered Committees recommended certain measures that also included positioning of Air Traffic Controllers by AAI, Meteorological Officers by IMD and manning by qualified personnel of control rooms by Uttarakhand Civil Aviation Development Authority (UCADA) to ensure safe helicopter operations.

Key safety initiatives implemented by DGCA include:

Strengthened Pilot Qualification & Training

- Mandatory route checks and recurrent training for all pilots operating on the Chardham sector.
- Special emphasis on high-altitude operations, adverse weather handling, and crew resource management.
- Deployment of only previously qualified Pilots in sector.

Enhanced Airworthiness Oversight

- Comprehensive airworthiness inspections of all helicopters deployed for the Yatra.
- Strict adherence to manufacturer-recommended maintenance schedules with increased frequency of checks during the operating season.

Operational Safety Measures

- Strict enforcement of weight & balance limits to ensure safe take-off and landing in challenging terrain.
- Mandatory use of modern navigation and communication aids for situational awareness.
- Enhanced weather monitoring with real-time updates for pilots through a dedicated information system.
- Air Traffic Services in advisory capacity

Passenger Safety & Awareness

- Safety briefings for all passengers before boarding, including use of seat belts, safe embarkation/disembarkation, and emergency procedures.
- Deployment of additional ground safety staff at helipads to assist and regulate passenger movement.

Strengthened Regulatory Monitoring

- DGCA flight operations and airworthiness teams will be deployed at critical helipads for on-ground monitoring.
- Surprise checks and audits will be conducted to ensure compliance with safety directives.

DGCA remains committed to ensuring the highest level of aviation safety and has reiterated that safety of passengers and crew remains paramount. The recommencement of helicopter services for Chardham Yatra is expected to provide pilgrims with a safe, efficient, and reliable mode of transport to the revered shrines.

SR/DK/SB

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