JAPAN’S FIRE AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT AGENCY ORDERS FIRST AIRBUS H160 TO BOLSTER EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

News / Manufacturer



Japan’s Fire and Disaster Management Agency, under the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, has signed an order for an Airbus H160, marking the agency’s very first acquisition of the next-generation helicopter. Stationed in Kumamoto prefecture in the Kyushu region, the H160 will join FDMA’s existing helicopter fleet to enhance nationwide emergency response, speed and coverage. Purpose-built to serve at the frontlines of crisis, the aircraft’s primary role will be rapid aerial reconnaissance and real-time visual intelligence gathering during major natural disasters, including large-scale scenarios such as a potential Nankai trough megaquake.

Jean-Luc Alfonsi, Managing Director of Airbus Helicopters in Japan commented: “We are deeply honoured that our long-standing customer, the FDMA, has chosen the H160 to expand their fleet and carry forward their mission-critical work. By integrating this aircraft, the FDMA will significantly enhance its operational readiness and reduce emergency reaction times. We are seeing strong and growing interest in the multi-mission H160 across Japan. To ensure these vital aircraft perform

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flawlessly on every life-saving mission, we are fully committed to supporting the expanding fleet through our dedicated H160 centre of excellence in Kobe."

To ensure seamless coordination during critical response windows, the H160 will feature Helisat advanced satellite technology. By streaming high-definition data directly to orbiting satellites, the system completely bypasses damaged ground infrastructure, providing emergency commanders with uninterrupted, real-time visibility straight from affected areas.?Furthermore, Airbus is developing custom snow landing gear designed specifically for the H160, ensuring uncompromising safety and stability during deep-snow operations in Japan's severe winter climates.

The deployment to Kumamoto builds on a strong, multi-decade foundation of proven operational success. The prefecture introduced the AS365N3 in 2001 for disaster management missions, and subsequently upgraded to an AS365N3+ in 2018. Operating the FDMA's new H160 alongside the prefecture's existing AS365N3+ represents a major technological leap, delivering superior range, safety and operational capabilities to bolster disaster response across Kumamoto and the wider Kyushu region.

The FDMA's H160 selection reflects a broader countrywide trend, with the versatile H160 increasingly becoming the aircraft of choice across Japan's municipal and prefectural agencies. Revered for its low acoustic footprint, advanced avionics and exceptional high-altitude maneuvering, four H160s are already actively in service across Japan, performing vital law enforcement, electronic news gathering and municipal fire fighting duties, with deployments continuing to grow as regional emergency services modernise.

The H160 is one of the world's most technologically advanced helicopters, designed and built to deliver the highest levels of operational safety alongside the extended range and spacious cabin required for demanding multirole operations. Equipped with the Helionix avionics suite, the H160 offers intuitive flight controls, enhanced situational awareness and reduced pilot workload. Capable of performing wide-ranging missions including law enforcement, offshore transportation, search and rescue, private and business aviation, and emergency medical services, the H160 has entered into service in Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, U.K., U.S. and many other European countries.

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