



HOME » AVIATION » THE BEST OF THE BEST 2003: HELICOPTERS - SIKORSKY S-76C+

## The Best of the Best 2003: Helicopters - Sikorsky S-76C+

JUNE 01, 2003

With the S-76C+, its most current version of the S-76, Sikorsky remains at the forefront of the increasingly competitive executive transport segment of the helicopter market. The S-76C+ features powerful engines and updated avionics while retaining the characteristics that have made the base S-76 so popular: size, speed, range, and a smooth, quiet ride. "We operate most of the helicopters that are on the market today, and there aren't many that can compete with the S-76," says Luca Dellanese, a line pilot for Helinet Aviation Services of Van Nuys, Calif., one of the largest helicopter charter services in Southern California. "Nothing is bigger or smoother. The customers all enjoy the Sikorsky the most."

The S-76C+ features the stability and ruggedness of the previous-generation S-76B's airframe, combined with full authority digital engine control (FADEC) engines, which simplify motor operation, increase fuel efficiency, and maximize power, all while making aircraft operation easier for the pilot.

Such improvements allow the S-76C+, which is rated for single-pilot instrument flight rule (IFR) operations, to fly day and night in inclement weather, while other helicopters can be grounded in rainy or windy conditions. In the cockpit, heated glass windshields and dual wipers keep sightlines clear for piloting in poor weather. Two Turbomeca Arriel 2S1 engines enable the C+ to cruise at 178 mph and give it a range of more than 400 miles—similar performance numbers to the standard version of the S-76.

An executive-configured \$8.5 million S-76C+ can seat as many as six passengers (including two in swiveling leather seats) in an interior finished with finely tailored upholstery and handcrafted wood cabinetry. The cabin, which is approximately 8 feet long and 6 feet wide, can also be configured to seat as many as 13 passengers, though in less comfortable accommodations.

Safety and reliability are two additional hallmarks of Sikorsky's machine. Sheena Steiner, Sikorsky's media relations manager, says that no other commercial helicopter has spent as much time airborne (approximately 3 million hours) as safely as the S-76, which is also used by hospitals for emergency medical services and by the military for search and rescue missions. According to the National Transportation Safety Board, there have been only 27 accidents since 1983 involving the S-76, including one nonfatal S-76C+ crash. Steiner also cites the helicopter's 99.9 percent dispatch rate for private and commercial operators.

Sikorsky provides an extensive maintenance support network for the S-76C+ through its own worldwide customer service group and through Helicopter Support Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Sikorsky. After all, helicopter owners, who are occasionally confronted with bumpy rides in their machines, do not want additional turbulence when it comes to servicing their aircraft.

Sikorsky, 800.946.4337, [www.sikorsky.com](http://www.sikorsky.com)

— Jan Tegler

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