New York Airspace Working Group  
On 14th August in Washington the US Federal Aviation Administration convened a New York Airspace Working Group that will review current operating procedures over the Hudson and East Rivers and was due to recommend safety improvements before the end of August according to FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt. FAA air traffic and safety experts will review and analyse a variety of proposals to change the operating procedures in the Visual Flight Rules corridors over the two rivers. Both fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters currently operate in the same airspace at or below 1,100 feet.

“We strongly encourage pilots to use standard practices in that area now, but it may make sense to require them,” Babbitt said. He added, “We have heard a lot of other good ideas about improving safety there and I am looking for a quick, but thorough review by the safety experts.”

The group was due to solicit comments from helicopter and aircraft operators and will review air traffic and pilot procedures before making its report to Babbitt on 28th August. In the meantime, Babbitt urged all pilots who operate in the area to follow the procedures outlined in a Notice to Airmen the FAA issued on 11th August. The NOTAM advises pilots who fly in the airspace over the two rivers to turn on their lights, use special radio frequencies, announce when they enter the airspace and fly at 140 knots or less.

Ice protection systems  
On 3rd August the FAA announced it had changed its certification standards for transport category aircraft to require either the automatic activation of ice protection systems or a method to tell pilots when they should be activated.

The new rule requires an effective way to ensure the ice protection system is activated at the proper time. The rule applies to new transport aircraft designs and significant changes to current designs that affect the safety of flight in icing conditions. There is no requirement to modify existing aircraft designs, but the FAA is considering a similar rulemaking that would cover those designs.

“We are adding another level of safety to prevent situations where pilots are either completely unaware of ice accumulation or do not think it is significant enough to warrant turning on their ice protection equipment,” commented FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt.
Under the revised certification standards, new transport aircraft designs must have one of three methods to detect icing and to activate the airframe ice protection system:

- An ice detection system that automatically activates or alerts pilots to turn on the ice protection system;

- A definition of visual signs of ice buildup on a specified surface (for example the aircraft’s wings) combined with an advisory system that alerts the pilots to activate the ice protection system; or

- Identification of temperature and moisture conditions conducive to airframe icing that would tip off pilots to activate the ice protection system.

The standards further require that after initial activation, the ice protection system must operate continuously, automatically turn on and off, or alert the pilots when the system should be cycled.

The FAA has previously addressed activation of pneumatic de-icing boots on many aircraft models by requiring activation of boots at the first sign of ice accumulation. This new certification standard, it is understood, further increases safety by not relying on the pilot alone to observe whether the aircraft is accumulating ice. Also this certification standard applies to all types of ice protection systems, not just pneumatic de-icing boots.