
Airborne imagery aids L'Aquila relief

A PORTABLE aerial video system that can be installed in a standard helicopter cockpit in less than an hour was used in disaster relief operations after the earthquake in L'Aquila, Italy, last year.

Helica is a remote sensing company specialising in airborne laser terrain mapping, hyperspectral surveys and aerial photography. It operates two Eurocopter AS350s and both helicopters have been modified to carry the specialist laser and hyperspectral equipment.

Airborne data is then processed by Helica at its headquarters in the Venezia Friuli Giulia region of Northern Italy so it can be used by customers. In April 2009, a team from Helica

used an AS350 equipped with a Wescam MX-15HDi EO/IR turret integrated with an HD video system (HDVS) to provide high-definition airborne imagery to the Italian Department of Civil Protection, who were co-ordinating the multi-agency relief effort in L'Aquila.

The HDVS comprises an HD display, HD downlink with a range of 150km, recorder and moving map system, all within a single box.

The whole system is European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) certified and can be installed in less than an hour.

The downlink receive site was quickly set-up and for every day of the relief mission, the system provided real-time HD imagery.