



Date: 25 August 2022

To: Interagency Helicopter Operations Subcommittee (IHOPS) and National Interagency Aviation Committee (NIAC)

From: Paul Linse- AD Aviation USDA Forest Service

Paul J Linse

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Date: 2022.08.26
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Subject: NWCG Standards for Helicopter Operations, PMS 510

Purpose: The following memorandum outlines a pending NWCG publication edit followed by an avenue of confirmation generating a document to be utilized during the informed decision-making process.

Background: The Standards for Helicopter Operations Unit (SHO) a subgroup under the Interagency Helicopter Operations subcommittee (IHOPS) has been historically tasked and continues to carry the responsibility of maintaining the NWCG Standards for Helicopter Operations publication PMS 510 (NSHO). The document itself is instrumental in defining interagency helicopter management and operational procedures for participating agencies. As such the United States Forest Service (USFS) is reliant upon the document and its edit process to institute change through policy.

Issue:

USFS Fire Aviation & Management (FAM) has been working diligently with the National Transportation and Safety Board (NTSB) to address and close-out the board's recommendations as they pertain to the Iron 44 findings. To date all recommendations have been closed out with exception to recommendation A-10-164. This recommendation asks for the review of agency aviation policy with a focus on the importance of glove dexterity to promote the ability to function seat belts, emergency exits and doors. After review and in response to this recommendation the USFS requested multiple edits to multiple policy documents to include adding the following Aviation Life Support Equipment (ALSE) language to the forefront of Chapter 9 Equipment Requirements and Maintenance of PMS 510 in May of 2021.

- PMS 510, Ch 9, page 84, Line 17 add the following:
Flight gloves (type GS/FRP-2) constructed of a soft leather palm and stretchable Nomex® fabric for the back are preferred. These gloves have a long cuff extending several inches above the wrist providing total coverage when the flight suit sleeve is properly worn. Gloves should fit snugly to provide maximum finger dexterity for the wearer. All-leather gloves (without synthetic liners) are acceptable if they provide the wearer with wrist coverage and finger dexterity. Gloves that meet the flame-resistant Nomex® and leather design (conforms to Military Specification MIL-DTL-81188C) are available that are compatible with modern touchscreen devices. These are preferred when touchscreen devices are mission essential.



Since submittal of the requested language above the USFS has come to learn the capacity of the current SHO subgroup has not afforded them the ability to add this edit or any others recommended through the NWCG Publication Revision Form process until calendar year 2023.

In conjunction with the NSHO revision request to address the NTSB recommendations the USFS also initiated a Helicopter Modernization Project Plan. Through extensive Market Research and evaluation, the USFS Helicopter Program has come to the determination that multiple modern helicopters to include a Type 1 helicopter offer increased safety attributes and a high level of mission relevance to the firefighting environment. USFS FAM leadership supports these findings but also recognizes the significance of the NTSB recommendations prior to initiating a Type 1 approval for passenger transport.

With the understanding of a delayed edit of the NSHO we are asking for confirmation of this edit to be added in 2023 through the parent committee of IHOPS by NIAC chair signature. By doing so an increased level of documentation and commitment will be created promoting accountability and enabling informed decision making by the NTSB and USFS Director of Fire & Aviation Management.

Action Requested:

Request concurrence of the listed above ALSE language to be implemented into the NWCG Standards for Helicopter Operations PMS 510, Chapter 9, pg 84, line 17 in the year 2023 by the Standards for Helicopter Operations Unit.

JOHN
BUEHLER

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NIAC Chair
John Buehler