



# National Wildfire Coordinating Group National Interagency Aviation Committee

NIAC-22-05

**Date:** 19 August 2022  
**To:** IHOPS, IATS and NWCG  
**From:** John Buehler, Chair, National Interagency Aviation Committee JOHN BUEHLER  
**Subject:** Taskings - Resolution for A219/S271 Inconsistencies

Digitally signed by JOHN BUEHLER  
Date: 2022.08.19 08:58:48 -0600

**Purpose:** The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the assigned subcommittees and groups the direction needed to resolve inconsistencies and confusion for our interagency aviation workforce regarding *A219 Helicopter Transport of External Cargo* and *S271 Helicopter Crewmember*.

**Background:** Currently, multiple training platforms/websites (IQCS and IAT), embedded curriculum and granted equivalencies have made navigating training requirements extremely difficult; as well as aviation management cannot assure a student/responder is prepared to safely perform helicopter external load operations. (*See enclosure IATS Memo A219 Issues M\_22\_01*).

**Issue/Action Requested:** Coordinated efforts with necessary stakeholders/subcommittees to update course curriculum, create standalone content that will not rely solely on equivalencies for completion records; provide a path for training websites to be linked. In some cases, it's recognized that some equivalencies may still need to be granted, however it should be on a limited basis. Any NWCG content revision will follow established NWCG Steward Training Revision Process: <https://www.nwcg.gov/course-steward-training-revision-process>.

## Taskings:

Tasking	Assigned To:	Timeline
<p><b>Task 1</b> <i>Phase 1. Update S271 Helicopter Crewmember</i> course content to include a required live helicopter external load exercise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>IF incorporation of Live helicopter exercise is not approved:</i> Provide a way to delineate in IQCS whether a live helicopter exercise was utilized in a S271 delivery so that IAT can offer the A219 course equivalency for S271.</li></ul> <p><i>Phase 2. Update S271 curriculum, with the intent to</i></p>	IHOPS	<p><b>Task 1:</b> <i>Phase 1:</i> Initiate Request for Change with IPSC/NWCG within 30 days of the date of this memo.</p> <p><i>Phase 2. Process initiated January/2023</i></p>

<p>be less reliant on IAT courses for equivalencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery should follow PMS 901-1</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Task 2.</b> Create a <i>Helicopter External Cargo Load Training</i> for wildland fire with the ability to use as a standalone for HELR training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery should follow PMS 901-1</li> </ul>	<p>IHOPS</p>	<p><b>Task 2:</b> Process initiated by January/2023</p>
<p><b>Task 3.</b> Create Taskforce to streamline IQCS and IAT for equivalencies and crosswalks. Explore the potential for the two training websites to be linked or the sharing of training completion records more easily.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>IF the two training websites cannot be linked:</i> Review policy with the intent of clearly delineating the NWCG and IAT aviation operation requirements.</li> </ul>	<p>IATS &amp; NIAC NWCG Coordinator</p>	<p><b>Task 3:</b> <b>Phase 1:</b> Initiate contact with appropriate stakeholders within 30 days of this memo. That may include, IQCS reps, OAS/IAT webmaster/IT, Contractors, website architects, training program managers.  <b>Phase 2:</b> Provide a communication plan to NIAC with necessary steps and timelines to complete tasking by January/2023.</p>

**Timelines/Report-outs:** Chairs of respective groups will report to NIAC NWCG Coordinator on status of projects and articulate clearly if there are any delays. They will in turn report to NIAC monthly on status of taskings. This is a multi year project and require an annual report to maintain continuity and progress.

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Enclosure: *IATS Memo A219 Issues M\_22\_01 see below*

**Subject:** Resolution for A219/S271 Inconsistencies

**Purpose:** The purpose of this memorandum is to express the need for resolution for inconsistencies and confusion for our interagency aviation workforce regarding *A219 Helicopter Transport of External Cargo* and *S271 Helicopter Crewmember*.

**Issue/Action:** Currently, multiple training platforms/websites (IQCS and IAT), embedded curriculum and granted equivalencies have made navigating training requirements extremely difficult; as well as aviation management cannot assure a student/responder is prepared to safely perform helicopter external load operations.

**Background and Coordination:** A219 made its first appearance in the Interagency Aviation Training Guide (IAT Guide) in 2004.

The course description is as follows:

*The purpose of this course is to provides technical training and procedures for agency personnel performing helicopter external load operations. Participants will receive classroom and field training and will be asked to demonstrate proper procedures to safely conduct helicopter external load operations. Participants will be given the opportunity to develop the skills to safely perform hover hookups and/or longline operations, via a live helicopter.*

In 2007, Agencies/Bureaus included *A-219 Helicopter Transport of External Cargo* curriculum into NWCG's *S271 Helicopter Crewmember* course offerings to increase firefighter awareness after a series of external load 'incidents with potential' and accidents resulting in pilot fatalities occurred. As a result, *S271 Helicopter Crewmember* incorporated much of the curriculum into its revision in 2010. By doing this, *S271* now grants several "equivalencies" in IQCS, to include A219. Several discrepancies as a result of this action are:

- *S271* does not require a live helicopter but A-219 does.
- A219 credit is granted in IQCS because of a *S271* completion certificate for a responder but credit may not be granted in the IAT system. There are additional steps for a course completion to be uploaded in the IAT system, which does not always happen or is known by the field.
- NWCG instructor qualifications found in [NWCG Standards for Course Delivery PMS 901-1](#) IAT instructor qualifications found in [IAT guide](#) have different requirements; therefore a NWCG course embedded with IAT curriculum may require the NWCG instructor to also become an IAT instructor, to create a course to input and document student credit on the IAT platform.
- A219 is a content-based curriculum (IAT) with an intensive field exercise. The intended outcome of this course is for a student to be fully qualified in the packaging and transporting of external loads. While *S271* curriculum provides the knowledge and skills necessary to be well versed in external loads, it still requires the student to be evaluated through a HECM Position Task Book (PTB), prior to being fully qualified through an experience-based training platform IQCS. The mismatch of use of course content creates confusion for training officers, instructors, and supervisors.
- Several Agency/Bureaus have a helicopter external load refresher requirement, outside of the IAT courses. This causes confusion for training officers and the field trying to host and record these courses in the IAT system.

To further complicate the issues, several agency's have endorsed *Helicopter longline Remote Hookup Specialist (HELRL)* found in the [Federal Wildland Fire Qualifications Supplement](#) Which requires A219 or *S271* (USFS), among other requirements. This has exacerbated the issue more with an additional need to provide this training, but with the similar discrepancies

as listed above. If a HELR was qualified via using S271, then that responder may never have trained with a live helicopter for external load operations.

**Recommendations:**

In looking for opportunities to reduce duplication of effort, it seems appropriate that the S271 course curriculum is reviewed.

- Update S271 Helicopter crewmember course content to reflect accurate equivalencies. To include a revision to incorporate a live helicopter exercise.
- Review policies with the intent of clearly delineating the requirements as they relate to NWCG aviation positions utilizing IAT content
- Streamline IQCS and IAT for equivalencies and crosswalks. The dual tracking systems are cumbersome for the workforce to manage.
  - This may result in a taskforce being created with SMEs/Contractors/Website architects to investigate if it's possible for the two training websites to be linked or the sharing of training completion records more easily.
- Providing a way to delineate in IQCS whether a live helicopter exercise was utilized in a S271 delivery so that IAT can offer the A219 course equivalency for S271.

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