



United States Department of the Interior

National Business Center

Aviation Management

300 E. Mallard Dr., Ste 200

Boise, Idaho 83706-3991



DOI AM OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES (OPM) MEMORANDUM NO. 04-10

Subject: Helicopter Rappel and Short-Haul Operations

Effective Date: January 1, 2004

Supersedes: OPM 03-10 dated January 1, 2003

Distribution: A, B, & C

Expiration Date: December 31, 2004

.1 General. This OPM establishes standards for Department of the Interior's (DOI) helicopter rappel program. The Helicopter Short-Haul Handbook establishes the standards for the DOI short-haul program.

.2 Definitions.

A. Helicopter Rappel - The deployment of qualified personnel from a hovering helicopter to the ground by means of an approved rope, descent device and technical equipment.

B. Helicopter Short-Haul - The transportation of personnel suspended under a helicopter on a fixed line to or from the closest available landing site from which a helicopter can safely operate.

C. Interagency Helicopter Rappel Guide (IHRG) - This guide is produced as a joint project by the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service. The information has been developed for the guidance of their employees, their contractors, and cooperating Federal agencies utilizing helicopter rappel. The IHRG covers qualifications, proficiency, equipment, operations and emergency procedures involved in these operations.

D. Helicopter Short-Haul Handbook - This handbook sets forth policies and procedures regarding training, qualifications, and equipment for helicopter short-haul operations. Copies of this handbook are available upon request from the Department of the Interior, Aviation Management Headquarters, Branch of Training.

.3 Approval.

A. Bureau Approval. Helicopter rappel/short-haul operations shall be approved by the appropriate bureau national headquarters.

B. Requests. Training and qualification requests for helicopter rappel/short-haul operations shall be forwarded to the Associate Director, Department of the Interior, Aviation Management (DOI AM). This request shall include a copy of the bureau's headquarters approval and proposed operational plan indicating when and how helicopter rappel/short-haul will be utilized.

.4 Personnel Requirements - Rappel Operations.

A. Pilot Qualifications. Pilots shall meet all the following requirements:

(1) Meet the appropriate requirements of the Departmental Manual or the procurement document.

(2) 50 hours -- Total hours in make, model and series offered.

(3) 100 hours -- Hours in weight class during last 12 months.

(4) 25 hours -- Rappel, short-haul or external load (sling) experience (long line requiring precision placement), last 12 months.

(5) Attend rappel training (optional to participate on rappel or short-haul simulator). This training shall be conducted and documented by a qualified spotter, and include the following:

(a) Briefing and familiarization on rappel bracket and hard points for the specific model.

(b) Seating arrangement for rappellers and/or spotters.

(c) Rappel cargo placement/location and deployment sequence and method.

(d) Exit procedures and sequences.

(e) Perform a minimum of six ground mockups in the aircraft model to be used, including:

(i) Rigging aircraft for rappel mission.

(ii) Deploying cargo.

(iii) Deploying rappellers.

(f) Briefing on any peculiarities of the specific model.

(6) Demonstrate ability to operate helicopter during a series of simulated rappels/cargo letdown/short-haul.

(7) Demonstrate ability to coordinate with the rappel spotter.

(8) Upon meeting the above requirements, the pilot may be approved for helicopter rappel operations or short-haul operations, as appropriate by an DOI AM or USFS Helicopter Inspector Pilot.

B. Pilot Proficiency. The pilot shall maintain currency in helicopter rappel flying at the same frequency required of the rappel spotter (every 14 days). If this cannot be accomplished every 14 days, a proficiency rappel flight must be completed prior to any actual operational mission.

C. Rappel/Short-Haul Training.

(1) Initial rappel/short-haul training shall be conducted by DOI AM Training Specialists to the guidelines established in the IHRG, *Short-Haul Handbook*, and lesson plans. The IHRG and the *Short-Haul Handbook* specifies operational guidelines, training and proficiency requirements for rappellers, spotters, check spotters, and short-haul personnel.

(2) Subsequent training may be conducted by a DOI AM -approved check spotter.

(3) Check spotter approval will be reviewed and renewed every three (3) years by a DOI AM Training Specialist to maintain currency with DOI and Interagency guidelines.

(4) Training and approval of rappellers, short-haulers, spotters, and check spotters will be documented by the user bureau.

.5 Helicopter Requirements. The helicopter must meet the requirements of the Departmental Manual and the procurement document, as appropriate.

.6 Personal Equipment. All rappel equipment including, but not limited to, harness, rope, descent device, karabiners, let-down equipment, helmet, and gloves will be approved by DOI AM in accordance with the requirements outlined in the IHRG and the DOI *Short-Haul Handbook*.

/s/ Michael A. Martin

Associate Director