

**File Code:** 5700**Date:** August 14, 2015**Route To:****Subject:** Emergency Helicopter Extraction Operations**To:** Regional Fire Directors, Regional Aviation Officers

The first and foremost priority of the Forest Service is employee health and safety. Thus we have developed an emergency medical short-haul program to deliver an approved method for the vertical extraction of injured personnel. We acknowledge that we lack the short haul resources to cover all our remote areas. We will continue to increase short haul qualified crews in the future to cover our Agency's needs. Until then, the Forest Service will diligently work on obtaining appropriate resources to support our personnel. Additionally, the Forest Service develops and maintains the Emergency Helicopter Extractions Source List ([http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/aviation/av\\_library/ehe\\_source\\_list.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/aviation/av_library/ehe_source_list.pdf)) that provides information on helicopter extraction sources for each geographic area.

Recently, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) informed their employees with the following information about an extraction method called HELLO (Helicopter Emergency Long-Line Last Option):

*"The HELLO mission is defined as transporting a critically injured person from an otherwise inaccessible location, using a helicopter longline. HELLO is considered a last resort option, when other methods are unavailable or cannot respond in the necessary time frame for life preservation."*

HELLO is not a BLM program. Crews are not trained to perform these missions and the equipment is not standardized or approved for human extraction. HELLO is a last resort option for the BLM, for use only when other methods are unavailable or cannot respond in the necessary time frame for life preservation.

It is important that Forest Service aviation and operations personnel understand that HELLO missions are not approved operations. Such missions are last resort options and should only be considered when other approved methods are unavailable. The Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management staff believes that departure from existing policy and procedures, and performing missions that personnel are not trained to perform, increases risk.

Although conducting HELLO or other non-approved missions outside an employee's training in response to an emergency is supported by the Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide (IHOG, Chapter 17), such missions should not be primary options, and helitack programs and Incident



Management Teams should not rely upon such unapproved missions in their planning for emergency medical evacuations.

*/s/ Dan Olsen (for)*

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Director FAM

cc: Art Hinaman, Tom Ricks, John Nelson, Rock Parrilla, John Harris, Seth Weber, Larry Sutton, Gary Sterling, Vince Welbaum, Walker Craig, Regional Aviation Safety Managers