



Interagency Aviation TECH BULLETIN



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Subject: Helicopter Cargo Hook Operational Checks

Area of Concern: All Helicopter External Load Operations

Distribution: All Helicopter Operations

Discussion: In recent weeks a single occurrence of an uncommanded release of a human external cargo secondary hook occurred during a non-agency utility operation. The hook involved was sent to the STC holder for disassembly and inspection. This inspection revealed that an internal cotter pin was not installed on a castellated nut which resulted in the hook load beam not getting fully seated into the locked position. The hook associated with this system is an electric and hydraulic actuated system that is like-in-kind to the cargo and remote cargo hooks used in resource and wildland fire helicopter operations. The STC holder issued Emergency Directive ED-B1514-1 requiring an inspection of the hook. As a result, the Forest Service, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management issued an immediate Tactical Pause for all short-haul operations pending an inspection of the hook. All inspections were completed, communicated to the proper agency contacts and the pause was rescinded.

This event highlights the importance that all individuals involved in interagency helicopter external load and longline missions must receive training in these operations. Each helicopter equipped with cargo and remote cargo hooks has specific pre-operational use checks that are required to be completed before operations commence.

Recommendations:

Work with the Helicopter Manager, Pilot, and Mechanic to become familiar with all safety and operational checks for the equipment installed on your helicopter.

Check, then double-check, that the pre-flight cargo hook checks have been completed prior to engaging in external load and longline missions!

Examples of pre-flight cargo and remote cargo hook checks:

Check #1: Pilot activates the primary electrical release of cargo hook.

Reset/close the load beam.

Check #2: Pilot activates the secondary hydraulic or cable release of cargo hook.

Capture the bucket, longline, or cargo rings on the load beam and close.

Check #3: Pilot activates the remote cargo hook electrical release.

Capture the swivel on the load beam and close.

Some make(s)/model(s) of cargo and remote cargo hooks have a sight window that will allow the user to see a hook lock indicator. If your helicopter has a cargo or remote cargo hook with this feature, an additional confirmation of the hook being in the locked position should be performed.



Figure 1. Some cargo hooks have sight window that will allow the user to see a hook lock indicator

For additional information or questions, contact your agency POC:

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