



United States Department of the Interior
Office of Aviation Services
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DOI OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES MEMORANDUM (OPM) – 32

Subject: Short-haul Operations

Effective Date: January 1, 2026

Last Updated: June 22, 2023

Expiration Date: December 31, 2026

1. **Summary of Changes.** None.
2. **Purpose.** This OPM modifies DOI aviation policy (351 DM 2, 351 DM 3) regarding short-haul operations to require that each DOI bureau conducting short-haul operations have a bureau-approved short-haul operations plan that serves as policy. This policy supersedes the 2010 DOI Helicopter Short-Haul Handbook.
3. **Authority.** This policy is established by the Director, Department of the Interior, Office of Aviation Services (OAS), in accordance with the provisions of Departmental Manual 112 DM 12 and 350 DM 1 and Secretarial Order 3322 dated August 23, 2012.
4. **General.** Short-Haul is transporting one or more persons suspended beneath a helicopter (HEC-human external cargo). As short-haul has evolved over time, elements of the DOI Helicopter Short-Haul Handbook have become outdated and/or are no longer applicable. To ensure guidance is current and relevant, each bureau within DOI conducting short-haul operations will be required to maintain a short-haul operations plan approved by the bureau's national aviation manager, which will serve as bureau policy under which their short-haul operations are conducted.
5. **Policy.** Policy for the use of all aircraft within DOI is contained in departmental manuals 350-353 (DM's) and the associated OPM's.
 - A. Bureau specific policy covering short-haul operations shall be included within the respective bureau's *National Aviation Management Plan*.
 - B. Bureaus conducting short-haul operations must have a short-haul operations plan approved by the bureau aviation manager that includes, at a minimum:
 - 1) General Information
 - 2) Qualifications and Requirements
 - 3) Training Requirements (e.g., Helicopter Crew Member, Crew Resource Management)
 - 4) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
 - 5) Short-Haul Equipment
 - 6) Operational Procedures

- 7) Risk Management Procedures
- 8) Emergency Procedures
- C. All aircraft operations will be conducted within DOI aviation requirements and policy.
- D. Bureau plans may be more restrictive but cannot be less restrictive than established DOI policy.
- E. All crewmembers are required to wear PPE as specified in the Interagency Aviation Life Support Equipment (IALSE) Handbook/Guide when aboard a helicopter.
- 6. **Responsibilities.** The approval, use and oversight of short-haul requires an effective and collaborative working relationship between OAS and the bureaus.
 - A. Bureau Responsibilities.
 - 1) Director:
 - a) New program requests will be approved by the bureau director and forwarded to the OAS director.
 - 2) National Aviation Office:
 - a) With the Interagency Helicopter Short-Haul Unit (HSHU), assist with the development and approve the bureau's short-haul operations plan.
 - b) Forward new program request to bureau director for approval.
 - c) Provide to OAS a copy of the bureau's approved short-haul operations plan and the unit's short-haul operations plan.
 - d) Approve Check Spotters.
 - 3) Units
 - a) Unit designate a Short-Haul Program Manager and creates the short-haul program request. Request will include the unit's *Short-haul Operations Plan* which describes when and how short-haul will be used and a Green-Amber-Red (GAR) risk- analysis process. It is recommended that new programs seek input from HSHU.
 - b) The new program request is forwarded to the national aviation office.
 - c) Once the unit's short-haul operations plan is reviewed by the national office, the unit's line officer will approve the unit's plan.
 - d) Once a unit has the bureau director's program approval, they will coordinate with other established short-haul programs to conduct training.
 - B. Office of Aviation Services Responsibilities.
 - 1) Develop technical specifications for contracted services.

- 2) Coordinate with the requesting unit for the scheduling of annual Interagency Helicopter Pilot Practical Test Standards (IHPPTS), Emergency Short-haul (SAR) testing.
 - 3) Evaluate and inspect contractor Pilots and equipment.
 - 4) Issue approvals for aircraft and Pilots.
 - 5) Review and evaluation bureau programs.
7. **Qualification and Requirements.** Training for Short-haulers, Spotters, Check Spotters and Pilots, including prerequisites, initial training, annual training and proficiency, must be specified in the bureau's *Short-Haul Operations Plan*. Training minimums at each level are:
- A. Short-hauler
- 1) Have completed the S-271, Interagency Helicopter Crewmember training course .
 - 2) Attend annual short-haul training.
 - 3) Demonstrate knowledge of the inspection, care and maintenance of short-haul equipment and rigging.
 - 4) Demonstrate knowledge of short-haul procedures.
 - 5) Demonstrate knowledge of emergency procedures.
 - 6) Demonstrate knowledge of mission components and ability to perform risk assessments.
 - 7) Complete four short-hauls, two in typical terrain, without procedural error during initial training.
 - 8) Complete two short-hauls, one in typical terrain, without procedural error during annual requalification training.
 - 9) Complete proficiency short-haul every 90 days.
- B. Spotter
- 1) Completed S-271, Interagency Helicopter Crewmember training course.
 - 2) Attend annual short-haul training.
 - 3) Be familiar with the helicopter procurement documents.
 - 4) Under the supervision of a qualified Check Spotter:
 - a) Demonstrate knowledge of the inspection, care and maintenance of short-haul equipment.
 - b) Demonstrate ability to rig the helicopter for short-haul, provide a team safety briefing, and conduct a safety check of short-haul personnel without procedural error.
 - c) Demonstrate knowledge of emergency procedures.

- d) Demonstrate effective crew resource management with Pilot and short-haul team.
- e) Demonstrate knowledge of risk assessment and mission structure.
- 5) Spot six loads, two in typical terrain, without procedural error during initial Spotter training.
- 6) Spot four loads, two in typical terrain, without procedural error during annual requalification training.
- 7) Complete proficiency spot of Human External Cargo (HEC) every 90 days.

C. Check Spotter

- 1) Meet all Spotter requirements
- 2) Qualified [Helicopter Manager \(HMGB\)](#) or Resource Helicopter Manager.
- 3) Qualified Spotter for 2 years.
- 4) Instruct two annual short-haul trainings.

D. Short-haul Pilot

In addition to the vendor requirements listed in 351 DM3.3, DOI short-haul Pilots must meet the following;

- 1) Qualified in accordance with 14 CFR 133 for Class A and B external load operations.
- 2) 50 hours pilot-in-command (PIC) in make and model in the preceding 12 months.
- 3) 25 hours total longline vertical reference (VTR) flight hours to include a minimum of 2 hours VTR training within the last 12 months.
- 4) Approved for longline operations.
- 5) Pass the Emergency Short-haul (SAR) Pilot Test described in the IHPPTS.
- 6) Attend annual short-haul training.
- 7) Understand short-haul techniques, Short-hauler/Spotter signals, and operational concerns.
- 8) Demonstrate ability to work with the short-haul Spotter(s).
- 9) Complete a HEC mission every 90 days.

8. **Short-Haul rope attachment Anchor.** A short-haul anchor system is defined as the points of attachment of the short-haul rope system to the helicopter. This system will include dual attachments designed to be controlled by spotter and/or pilot release in an emergency. The load must be fully jettisonable, using two separate and independent actions.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) or OAS shall approve attachments, their installation, and any proposed changes to attachments.

Inspections and replacement will be done in accordance with manufacturers' specifications. Records will be maintained by the respective short-haul program.

9. **Aircraft requirements.** Aircraft must be equipped with FAA approved Human External Cargo (HEC) dual hook system (if manufactured for make and model offered). Compliance may be deferred until the next contract cycle.

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