CHAPTER 10: PERSONNEL TRANSPORT

I. Introduction.

The safe transport of personnel in helicopters is of the highest priority. Using standard procedures for transport outlined in this chapter will ensure, to the extent possible, that agencies meet their objective of transporting personnel safely and efficiently.

In order for personnel to be transported legally in a government aircraft¹, each passenger must meet the definition of authorized passenger.

Refer to the glossary for definitions of flight crew member, air crew member and passenger. Air crew members may be permitted on board aircraft during certain missions (for example, external loads) on which passengers are prohibited.

A. Aircrew/crewmember.

A person working in and around aircraft and is essential to ensure the safety and successful outcome of the mission. Aircrew members are required to either be on board or attend to the loading and unloading of passengers and cargo at all landings and takeoffs, attend to external loads and ensure that passengers have received a pre-flight safety briefing.

B. Authorized/Official Passengers.

Passengers are any persons aboard an aircraft who does not perform the function of a flight crew/pilot or aircrew member. Passengers may be transported in government aircraft only if they meet the definition of an official passenger.

- Officials and employees of the federal government travelling on official business.
- Members of Congress and employees of congressional committee staffs whose work relates to the agency’s programs.
- Non-federal passengers when engaged in missions which enhance accomplishment of an agency program such as personnel of cooperating state, county or local agencies; representatives of foreign governments; and contractor’s representatives to include those employed by such agencies; and private citizens.

C. Unauthorized Passengers.

All personnel who are not official passengers shall be considered unauthorized passengers and are not authorized to be transported in any aircraft owned or operated by or on behalf of the government. A person who is otherwise an official passenger could become unauthorized by performing a function for which that person is not authorized, e.g. a passenger performing pilot duties without proper authorization.

¹ Government aircraft are defined as those owned, bailed, loaned, leased or lease/purchased, rented, chartered, or contracted by a government agency.
D. Carriage of Government Employees Aboard Restricted Category Helicopters.

Government employees may not be passengers or air crew members aboard helicopters operated as restricted category aircraft.

E. OMB Circular A-126 Requirements.

OMB Circular A-126 establishes approval and reporting requirements for both point-to-point administrative travel cost-comparisons and mission flights involving Senior Federal Officials. Refer to agency specific directives for guidance. The local unit aviation manager is usually responsible for meeting these requirements. State and local agencies may have similar direction.

F. News Media as Passengers.

Agency officials may authorize members of accredited news organizations to fly in government aircraft subject to the following requirements:

1. General. A qualified Helicopter Manager or Flight Manager shall be assigned to the mission. All requirements regarding use of personal protective equipment, flight following, load calculations, and hazard analysis shall be followed.

2. Resource/Project Missions. If the mission is special use, a Project Aviation Safety Plan shall be required and approved by line management prior to the flight. It must show that the carriage of news media aboard the aircraft is of an official nature and is advantageous to the agency. Since news media are thereby designated official passengers, no flight release waiver is necessary.

3. Incident Missions. As a general rule, the Incident Commander on Type I or II Incident Management Teams may authorize all flights with media on board. On local unit fires, the line manager or their designee is usually the approving authority. Flights on government aircraft with news media aboard must be in the interest of the government. No flight release waiver is required. This general guidance may be further restricted by agency local unit policy. The air operations staff should check with the local area to ascertain any additional restrictions or necessary approvals.

4. Restricted Category Helicopters. Carriage of news media aboard restricted category aircraft is specifically prohibited.

II. Qualified Personnel.

Helicopter and helibase management personnel must be qualified to supervise and coordinate passenger transport activities on incidents or projects per the requirements in Chapter 2.
III. Load Calculations and Manifesting.

During passenger transport operations, load calculations shall be performed prior to any flight activity in accordance with procedures outlined in Chapter 7 and Appendix A. Personnel manifesting procedures are addressed later in this chapter.

IV. Air Crew Member On Board During External Load Missions.

As a general rule, only the Pilot(s) shall be aboard helicopters when conducting external load operations.

However, FAR 133 authorizes an aircrew member to be aboard the aircraft when conducting external load operations when:

- The safety of a mission can be substantially enhanced, and
- The capability of the helicopter is not significantly reduced, and
- The helicopter is not in the restricted category.

Missions where safety and/or effectiveness may be enhanced by an aircrew member being on board during the conduct of external load missions include, but are not limited to:

- Conditions of visibility (smoke, smog) and/or terrain where the Pilot requests an observer aboard to optimize detection of obstacles and other aircraft.
- Complexity of the incident or project and the cockpit workload, to include large numbers of aircraft operating in the vicinity, close and frequent coordination needed with ground personnel, overloaded radio frequencies, etc.
- Areas of airspace complexity (military training areas such as Special Use Airspace or Military Training Routes; high-density civil operations) where the observer could enhance the ability to avoid collisions with other aircraft.

The Pilot has the final authority regarding carrying an aircrew member during external load operations. Air operations staff should conduct an on-site risk analysis which weighs the benefits of increased safety and efficiency versus the added exposure. The mission(s) must also be adequately planned.

Individual agency exemptions granted by the FAA to FAR 91.119, Minimum Safe Altitudes, may also require an observer on board during specified situations. Consult the Interagency Airspace Coordination Guide.

V. Procedures for Transporting Personnel at Helibases or Helispots.

At project or incident helibases and helispots, large numbers of personnel are often moved via helicopter(s). When preparing for transport of personnel, the following guidelines apply.
A. Arrival of Personnel at the Helibase or Helispot.

- The person in charge of any group of people needing helicopter transportation (for example, Crew Supervisor, Strike Team Leader, Chief-of-Party) shall report to the person in charge of the helibase or helispot.

- The person in charge should give the Helicopter Manager, Flight Manager, or Loadmaster a list of the people to be transported so that a manifest can be completed. Passengers should be appropriately clothed (PPE) and ready for transportation.

B. Manifesting Personnel.

The manifesting process tracks personnel being transported and ensures that allowable payload limitations are not exceeded. Consult Appendix A for instructions on completion of Form HCM-9, Interagency Helicopter Passenger/Cargo Manifest. To complete this form the manifester will need the following.

- Full name of each person being transported
- Weight of each person with personal gear
- Weight of additional tools and equipment
- Destination of personnel and/or cargo
- The person in charge should maintain control of personnel at all times.

**NOTE:** Manifesting of handcrews using their crew manifest is acceptable. If a handcrew provides an accurate manifest, it is not necessary to transfer names to the Interagency Helicopter Passenger/Cargo manifest.

**NOTE:** Weights must be accurate, not estimated. If scales are available, use them. Scales are required at incident or project helibases and, if possible, should be provided at helispots.

C. Other Considerations.

- The Pilot's knowledge of helispot location, hazards, etc. On helibases, the use of Form HBM-2, Aviation Locations Summary, to provide a briefing is required.

- The method of handling and transporting tools, equipment, and supplies (external or internal, hazardous materials requirements, etc.).

- Emergency procedures to be followed.

- Stops to be made en route.

- Procedures for unloading personnel and/or cargo at destination, with the assurance that:
• The destination is staffed by trained personnel or,
• An air or flight crew member is assigned to the flight to assist or,
• One of the passengers is qualified to assist.

D. Passenger Safety Briefings.

Once manifesting has been completed, the safety briefing can be accomplished. Briefings shall be given to every passenger prior to entering the safety circle to board the helicopter. The briefing should follow the format in the Aircraft Safety Briefing. See Exhibit 10-1.

The safety briefing may be given by the Pilot or as delegated by the Pilot to authorized and qualified personnel such as a helicopter manager, flight manager, helicopter crewmember or Loadmaster. The person giving the briefing must:

• Ensure that instructions are clear and understood.
• Ensure in-flight emergency procedures are included.

E. Loading Procedures.

After the safety briefing has been given, consider the following:

• Helicopter crewmembers or other authorized, trained personnel shall assist in the loading operations.
• Personal items carried on board must be adequately secured.
• Prior to approaching the helicopter, remove canteen belts, vests with full pouches, fire shelters, and other items which might impede proper fastening of seat belts/shoulder harnesses. These items must be placed and secured in an appropriate area.
• Stay in safe area prescribed by helicopter crew or other authorized personnel until given the direction to load.
• Wear appropriate head protection as referenced in Chart 9-1.
• First person into the helicopter passenger compartment should move to center seat, or seat assigned by Pilot or helicopter crew personnel.
• Find seat belt and fasten; if unable, advise the helicopter crew person who will assist.
• Ensure that personal protective equipment is properly worn (that is, sleeves rolled down and collars up). See Chapter 9, Charts 9-1 and 9-2, for PPE requirements.
• Large gear such as fire tools should be handled by helicopter crew person.
• Ensure that all personnel understand the instructions given by Pilot or helicopter crew person.
CAUTION: When opening hinged doors to embark or disembark, passengers should keep one hand on the door at all times until the door is secured.

F. In-Flight Precautions.

- No smoking during flight.
- Keep clear of controls. **DO NOT TOUCH** controls except in an emergency where, if the Pilot is incapacitated, a passenger may shut down the fuel and electrical supply.
- Secure all items, especially when flying with the door(s) off or open.
- Be aware of emergency exits and read instructions pertaining to emergency egress. If in doubt, ask questions.

G. Unloading Procedures.

- Wait for Pilot, helicopter crewmember, or other authorized personnel to give a clear signal for offloading.
- Doors should be opened only by helicopter crewmembers, other authorized personnel, or at the direction of the Pilot when no one is available at the landing site.
- Remove seat belts and lay them on the seat. If possible, refasten them before exiting.

CAUTION: Ensure that seat belts are inside the aircraft when closing doors. A loose seat belt can cause major damage when the helicopter becomes airborne.

- Maintain control of all personal items. If an item is lost, do not go after it.
- Exit the helicopter slowly and use the departure route indicated by the helicopter crew or the Pilot. When large numbers of passengers are being transported, helicopter personnel will normally accompany passengers from the aircraft to the safety zone.

CAUTION: When exiting the aircraft, do not walk toward the tail rotor or uphill. If in doubt, ask the Pilot or helicopter personnel what the approved exit route is.

- After leaving the helicopter, move to an area which is **not** in the departure flight path for the helicopter.
- Once shut-down procedures have been initiated by the pilot, passengers should wait to exit until the rotors have come to a complete stop.
VI. Personnel Transport Using Military Helicopters.

A. Incident Operations.

For aviation operations using Active Duty/Reserve Military helicopters, and National Guard units officially “federalized” by DoD, refer to Chapter 70 of the Military Use Handbook for specific policy and procedural information.

The use of National Guard units for federal firefighting purposes within their state must be outlined in national, regional, state or local agreements and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between federal agencies and the specific National Guard units.

B. Project Operations.

It is recommended that an agency Helicopter Manager be assigned to any military helicopter ordered for a project. Duties and responsibilities are the same as those for incident operations.

VII. Special Law Enforcement Operations.

See Chapter 16 for differences in passenger transport procedures on special law enforcement missions. Unless specifically authorized in Chapter 16, law enforcement missions shall adhere to the procedures outlined in this chapter.

VIII. Special Search and Rescue Operations.

See Chapter 17 for differences in passenger transport procedures on search and rescue missions. Unless specifically authorized in Chapter 17, search and rescue missions shall adhere to the procedures outlined in this chapter.
Exhibit 10-1: Standard Helicopter Safety Briefing Checklist

**MANAGER BRIEFING WITH PILOT**

1. **Pilot Card:** Qualified and current for aircraft type and mission.

2. **Aircraft Card:** Aircraft Approved for mission?

3. **Flight Plan/Resource Tracking:** FAA or Agency Flight plan filed; Resource Tracking procedures identified.

4. **Flight Following/Radio/AFF Equipment:** Flight following procedures in place; radio/AFF equipment is adequate and operational. During takeoffs and landings there should be no radio traffic that might distract the pilot.

5. **Nature of Mission:** Pilot briefed on nature and sequence of mission.

6. **Analysis of Known Hazards:** Known hazards discussed; high-level recon prior to decent to low-level.

7. **PIC Concept:** Pilot shall not be pressured into performing missions beyond pilot’s capability or that of the aircraft.

8. **Hazardous Materials:** Identify any Hazardous Materials that will be transported and notify the Pilot. Take appropriate actions.
HELICOPTER PASSENGER BRIEFING (FRONT)

Pilot or designated Helitack must brief all passengers prior to flight

1. Personal Protective Equipment: See Chart 9-1 for requirements.
   - Nomex Clothing (long-sleeved shirt & pants, or flight suit)
   - Approved Helicopter Flight Helmet
   - All-Leather Boots
   - Hearing Protection
   - Nomex and/or Leather Gloves
   - Survival Equipment as applicable (PFD, Life Rafts, etc.)

2. NO Smoking: Rules in and around aircraft

3. Approach and departure paths:
   - Always approach and depart from the down slope (lower) side as directed by Pilot/Helitack
   - Approach and depart helicopter in a crouch position, do not run
   - Keep in pilot's field of vision at all times
   - Stay clear of landing area when helicopters landing or departing
   - Stay away from the main and tail rotors. Do not chase any item that has become unsecured
   - Never go near the tail of helicopters

4. Tools and Equipment:
   - Secure hand tools and equipment awaiting transport
   - Make assignments for carrying tools/equipment to/from helicopter
   - Carry tools/long objects parallel to the ground, never on shoulder
   - All tools and equipment loaded/unloaded by qualified personnel
   - Portable Radios turned off

5. Helicopter Doors: Location and normal operation
 Exhibit 10-1: Standard Helicopter Safety Briefing Checklist (continued)

HELCOPER PASSENGER BRIEFING (CONTINUED)

6. In-Flight Discipline:
   • Follow the instructions of pilot
   • Loose items inside of aircraft secured and manageable
   • All baggage secured in aircraft or cargo compartment
   • Never throw any object from the helicopter
   • No movement inside aircraft once seated
   • Keep clear of the flight controls at all times
   • Unbuckle only when directed to do so by Pilot or Helitack
   • Leave doors closed, wait for Helitack personnel to unload
   • Know location of first aid kit, survival kit, fire extinguisher, ELT fuel and battery shutoff switch

7. In-Flight Emergency Procedures
   • Emergency Exits: Location and normal operation
   • Follow instructions of Pilot/Helitack personnel
   • Snug seat belt and shoulder harness; secure gear
   • Emergency Seating Position WITH SHOULDER HARNESS (four point OR single diagonal strap):
     sit in full upright position with head and back pressed against seat and use arms to brace in
     position. If time permits and so equipped, lock the inertial reel
   • Emergency Seating Position WITH LAP BELT ONLY: bend over as far as possible and hold onto
     your legs
   • Assist any injured person who cannot leave the aircraft
   • Move clear of the aircraft only after rotor blades stop or when instructed to do so by the pilot or
     helicopter crew
   • Assess situation, follow pilot/helicopter manager instructions, render first aid, remove first aid kit,
     survival kit, radio, ELT and fire extinguisher