



Interagency Aviation Accident Prevention Bulletin



No. IA APB 20-01 Date: September 18, 2020 **AMENDED** Page 1 of 2

Subject: Aviation Life Support Equipment

Area of Concern: Flight Safety

Distribution: All Aviation Activities

Discussion: ALSE – Helmet Deadline Change

Due to the intense and prolonged operational tempo that will continue long into the foreseeable future, the deadline for complying with the flight helmet requirements in section 2.2 (5) of the Interagency Aviation Life Support Equipment (ALSE) Handbook/Guide has been changed to **January 1st, 2021**.

On April 18, 2018, the ALSE Handbook/Guide¹ was revised adding a new performance standard for aviation helmets. A two-year compliance period was issued to afford manufacturers of nonmilitary approved helmets with sufficient time to test their products and users time to program resources for acquisition and fielding of any new helmets by April 19, 2020. Since then, many helmets have met that standard, and more are being added as manufactures and laboratories learn to cope with the challenges resulting from the global pandemic. Approved helmets and their certificates can be viewed at the following website <https://www.doi.gov/aviation/safety/helmet>



Figure 1. Older Helmets may not be approved. Check the OAS website for the latest information.

The following issues also disrupted both manufacturers and user's ability to meet this requirement:

1. Only one helmet manufacturer had tested and offered a (non-military approved) helmet in one size at the end of 2019. Last month that list grew to many more helmets from two manufactures (and more are in testing) but that has not provided enough time for users to program resources, acquire and field this equipment.

2. An unforeseen national crisis caused by the Coronavirus forced everyone to implement drastic measures to minimize its spread. This has severely impacted testing facilities, parts suppliers, and acquisition capabilities.

The delayed testing of non-military approved helmets and the impact of the Coronavirus during the remaining time period does not provide adequate time for either manufacturers or users. As such, an extension to January 1, 2021 should provide sufficient time to account for the aforementioned issues.

The OAS website list all of the approved helmets and all of the documents including the ALSE handbook, the Aviation Helmet Standard and any certificates of compliance received thus far. Previously approved helmets in the 2008 version of the ALSE handbook are listed on the OAS Helmet webpage, www.doi.gov/aviation/safety/helmet

Contractors: Some procurement documents (DOI or USFS aviation contracts) originated prior to 2018 and may possess language that does not contain the updated ALSE approved helmet requirements. These contracts written before the ALSE revision date may still allow contractors to use helmets that are not on the approved list. The procurement document takes precedence over DOI/USFS publications unless specifically referenced in the procurement document. Contractors should review their ALSE requirements in their contracts.

Most contracts originated in or after 2018 will reference the ALSE Handbook/Guide to find approved helmets and the currently approved list on the OAS helmet webpage, www.doi.gov/aviation/safety/helmet.

Bureaus/Regions/Agencies should procure helmet models that meet the ALSE requirement and should be based on the ability to acquire repair parts, equipment, and other related supplies as well as trained personnel to repair and inspect helmets. Each unit conducting aviation, both fire and resource missions, may have unique requirements and is encouraged to supplement ALSE requirement to be better meet mission needs and to mitigate risks.

Recent mishaps, both occurring under the operational control of the Department of Interior and the U.S. Forest Service have continued to demonstrate the importance of helmets in protecting aircrews. It is important that employees ensure that the helmet is good working order and serviceable before flight. Maintain all ALSE equipment according to the manufacturer instructions and be sure it is ready to perform its protection.

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