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Interagency Aviation ACCIDENT PREVENTION BULLETIN



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Subject: Flight Helmet Maintenance

Area of Concern: All Aviation Operations

Distribution: All Aviation Users

Discussion: Proper flight helmet care and maintenance is essential to ensure the most important part of your body receives the protection the helmet was designed to provide. NIFC Ramp Services has recently received helmets from the field in extremely poor condition necessitating their removal from service (figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. Mold and corrosion on the interior of this helmet poses a serious health risk.



Figure 2. The deep gouge to the helmet's shell makes it unsafe and unserviceable.



While there is no “requirement” for Ramp Services to inspect your flight helmet, it is highly recommended amongst manufacturers to have your helmet inspected by a “Technically Qualified” person every two years (more often depending on use). Inspection and repair of your flight helmet by a technically qualified person is critical to maintaining your helmet’s ability to provide protection and minimize cost by extending its useful life. The best method to ensure helmet users achieve this is to create a system that tracks flight helmet use and inspection intervals.

For the past 25 years BLM Ramp Services, located at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) in Boise, ID, has inspected and repaired Gentex SPH-4 & 5 flight helmets for interagency aviation users. In addition to the professional inspection and repair of your helmet, Ramp Services provides all of their labor FREE OF CHARGE. The only cost to your unit is for shipping and replacement parts.

NOTE: Ramp Services only supports Gentex SPH-4&5 flight helmets.

Often, flight helmet neglect and abuse render it unsalvageable and the helmet must be destroyed in order to prevent any further usage. In the example (above), an ounce of prevention would have saved this unit over \$700 in replacement costs (excluding down time), reduced the exposure to disease from bacteria, and reduced the risk of using unserviceable/unsafe equipment.

Lesson: Sending an unserviceable helmet to Ramp Services is a waste of their time and your money.

Flight helmets are an expensive piece of safety equipment required for most aviation missions. Flight helmets are proven to save lives! In an accident your life could depend on your flight helmet. To protect yourself, your people, and this expensive piece of equipment, all flight helmet users should follow the guidance within the Department of Interior Flight Helmet Users Guide (<http://amd.nbc.gov/safety/library/helmetguide.pdf>).

*REMEMBER, as the user of the flight helmet you are responsible to ensure **your** helmet is serviceable prior to flight. Allow yourself the time to inspect, take care of, and treat your helmet with the care it requires. **If you take care of it, it will be in better shape to take care of you!***

For more information related to flight helmet inspection contact Don Hubbartt at BLM Ramp Services, 208-387-5529.

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