



## Interagency Aviation

# ACCIDENT PREVENTION BULLETIN



No. IAAPB 12-04

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**Subject:** Personal Floatation Device (PFD)

**Area of Concern:** Helicopter Water Bucket & Snorkel Operations

**Distribution:** Helicopter Operations

**Discussion:** Recent contract compliance audits and ASTAT visits revealed that PFD's are not being worn during operations that would require an approved flotation device. This finding was more frequent within Type III and CWN contracts however, there were a few findings that involved exclusive use Type I helicopters as well. PFD's are required as per DOI and USFS policy and contracts.

- \* Most helicopter contracts state: “A personal flotation device (PFD) required by 14 CFR 91 shall be worn by each individual on board the helicopter when conducting operations beyond power-off gliding distance to shore, and during all hovering flight operations conducted over water sources such as ponds, streams, lakes, and coastal waters.
- \* IHOG Reference—Chapter 9 states: “Personal Flotation Devices (PFD). An inflatable personal flotation device that meets requirements of 14 CFR 91 or inflatable life preserver required by 14 CFR 135 shall be worn by each individual on board the helicopter when conducting operations beyond gliding distance to shore, and during all hovering flights over water sources such as ponds, streams, lakes, and coastal waters. Automatic inflation (water activated) personal flotation devices shall not be allowed.”
- \* Aviation Life Support Equipment (ALSE) Handbook (page 6) states: “an inflatable PFD must be worn by all occupants in single engine aircraft and made immediately available to all occupants in multiengine aircraft that are operating off of or to water, or that operate beyond gliding distance from shore including water bucket dipping and snorkeling operations.”



### Recommendations:

1. Helicopter Inspector Pilots and Helicopter Managers enforce PFD usage as per department policy (ALSE), contractual requirements, and IHOG.
2. Unit managers and supervisors randomly inspect for PFD compliance.
3. Vendors ensure pilots adhere to contract requirements regarding PFDs.

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