



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

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**OAS INFORMATION BULLETIN NO. 02-01**

To: All DOI Aviation Operations  
From: Michael C. McCurry, Acting Director, Office of Aircraft Services  
Subject: Training and Approval Procedure for Helitorch Pilots

The Department of the Interior is providing clarification of the procedure for initial pilot qualification for helitorch operations. The pool of experienced and qualified pilots is dwindling. As a result, additional training at the project site becomes necessary prior to approving pilots for these missions. This information should be shared with all individuals who are planning prescribed fire projects that may use a helitorch.

Helitorch training shall be conducted in three phases:

Phase One. The Bureau must provide inexperienced pilots with the ground school needed to establish basic knowledge of fire behavior, aerial firing tactics, ground tactics, emergency procedures for escaped fire situations, communications, support personnel, transport of hazardous material, and other information associated with the local project.

Phase Two. This provides ground training to achieve flight proficiency with the helitorch. Ground training must address helitorch operations, maintenance, hook up procedures, and safety equipment. The solo pilot will gain proficiency with the external load attached to the helicopter in a dry state. This should include proposed firing runs and several takeoffs and landings with the helitorch attached. Phase one and two must be documented in a letter of training and signed by a qualified Bureau helitorch instructor.

Phase Three. The third phase provides aerial firing practice in small and confined areas. A designated pilot inspector (OAS or USFS) must be present for this phase. Once the Bureau project manager and pilot inspector are confident that the pilot is proficient, an appropriate pilot card can be issued and the prescribed project may commence.

Bureaus anticipating the need for OAS assistance with helitorch projects should contact the appropriate OAS Area Office early in the planning stage to allow for coordination between the responsible offices and vendors.

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Michael C. McCurry, Acting Director