

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**Aviation Management Directorate**

# Safety Alert

**No. 04-01**

**April 9, 2004**

Page 1 of 1

**Subject:** Helicopter long line bucket operations

**Area of Concern:** Aviation Operations

**Distribution:** All DOI Aviation Activities

**Discussion:** On Friday, March 19, 2004 an incident with potential occurred when a 50-foot long line, with a bucket attached, came into contact with the tail stinger of a BH-407 while in forward flight.

In response to that incident, Appendix 2 of DOI AMD Operational Procedures (OPM) Memorandum No. 04-21, titled Interagency Fire Helicopter Standards, was modified on March 30, 2004, to include an indicated airspeed limit during water bucket operations.

Paragraph .3 Policy, subparagraph C. states "For other than tandem rotor helicopters, while conducting water bucket operations, airspeed shall be limited to 80 KIAS or the airspeed limitation established by the Rotorcraft Flight Manual whichever is less."

As in any external cargo operation, the pilot is responsible for monitoring the water bucket and its controllability/flight characteristics during all phases of flight. The pilot is responsible for determining the airspeed limit according to the load and line length. Airspeed with any external cargo is always limited by controllability. Caution should always be exercised when carrying any external cargo, as handling characteristics may be affected by the size and weight and shape of the cargo. The pilot should remember that an external load might exhibit different flight characteristics with different makes and models of helicopters.

This Safety Alert has been coordinated with the USDA/Forest Service.

If you have any questions regarding this subject please contact your Aviation Management Directorate (AMD) Area/Regional office:

Alaska Regional Office (Anchorage)	907-271-3700
East Area Office (Atlanta)	770-458-7474
West Area Office (Boise)	208-334-9310
West Area Office (Phoenix)	623-879-0589

/s/ Robert Galloway  
Robert Galloway  
Aviation Safety Manager