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Subject: Hazard Pay for Low Level Helicopter Flights

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs and WO Staff

This letter is to provide guidance concerning the granting of hazard pay differential for limited control flights authorized by 5 CFR 550, Subpart I, Appendix A.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) currently authorizes a 25 percent hazard pay differential for individuals, except pilots, who are participating in limited control flights undertaken under unusual and adverse conditions, (such as extreme weather, maximum load or overload, limited visibility, extreme turbulence, or low level flights involving fixed or tactical patterns), which threaten or severely limit control of the aircraft.

OPM has clarified that the word aircraft as used in this context refers to both fixed-wing airplanes as well as rotary-type helicopters. Therefore, helicopter work at low levels does qualify for hazard pay; whereas, point-to-point flying requiring routine take-offs and landings do not. As a result, the Forest Service has determined that employees will be eligible for hazardous pay differential when flying in a helicopter for stationary or maneuvering above the ground at low elevations up to 500 feet above the terrain or vegetative canopy in daylight, or at less than 1,000 feet in mountainous areas at night.

If you have any questions, please contact Debbie Rigden at (703) 605-0822 or email her at drigden@fs.fed.us.

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