



Department of the Interior

SAFETY ALERT

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Subject: Aviation Operations Tempo

Area of Concern: Flight and Personnel Safety

Distribution: All Aviation Activities

Discussion: Operational tempo and performance can sometimes be at odds with one another. Recent events involving wildfire operations are demonstrating a need for a momentary pause to ensure history does not repeat itself.

A recent review of SAFECOMs since the 4th of July shows numerous events that could have resulted in an accident or serious injury. The events included rushed maintenance (SAFECOM yet to be released), rushed refueling resulting in a missing fuel cap (SAFECOM [18-0457](#)), numerous instances of a dropped or dragged buckets (SAFECOMs [18-0453](#), [18-0508](#), [18-0539](#), [18-0551](#), and three other SAFECOMs yet to be released), three potential near mid-air collisions (SAFECOMs [18-0455](#), [18-0458](#), and one other SAFECOM yet to be released), and a S.E.A.T. hitting a tree (SAFECOM yet to be released). The most serious was when the pilot started the helicopter with maintenance personnel on top of the aircraft, resulting in one person being hit by the rotor blade (SAFECOM [18-0489](#)).

All of these events involved wildfire operations, which are inherently dangerous. This time of year can be even more hazardous as personnel begin to experience fatigue and complacency, which often leads to mistakes. Always use checklists to keep from overlooking or missing a critical item.

Managing ops tempo is a shared responsibility between managers, coworkers and YOU! Nobody truly knows your limits better than the original owner of the equipment. Communicating your limits and establishing expectations is the first step in mitigating mishaps and allows planners to effectively manage operations.

Know when to say “when”.

/s/ Keith Raley

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