

# U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT



## Aviation Operations Alert

No. 11-01

Date: August 31, 2011

Subject: Lessons Re-learned

Area of Concern: Fire and Natural Resource Missions

Distribution: Aviation Bases and Dispatch Centers

Discussion: Within the past 4-5 weeks the BLM aviation program has had 4 close calls.

1. July 26, Airplane Incident with Potential (IWP) during takeoff from a landing strip with marginal parameters for error. Cessna 207 Skywagon landing gear width 10' - width of clearing on landing strip 12-20'. On takeoff roll, the aircraft drifted left causing the left main gear to come in contact with the brush lining the edge of the landing strip. No injuries.

Lessons Re-learned: Use the correct aircraft for the mission and category of flight. Reference: [BLM National Aviation Plan, 5.7 Categories of flight](#) and [Safecom 11-0744](#)



2. Aug 13, Helicopter Wire Strike upon landing for refueling. AS350 B2 with bucket on descended through power lines. Contract mandated wire cutter kit severed both wires. No damage to aircraft or injuries.

Lessons Re-learned: Always conduct a high and low level recon prior to attempting to land. All eyes and a sterile cockpit must be engaged during all landings and takeoffs. Unfortunately after completing a 360 degree recon the Pilot did not see the power pole or power lines running through the L.Z. Reference: [IHOG Chpt 3: Operational Planning Pg. 3-24](#), [Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations, Pg. 16-8](#) and [Safecom 11-0779](#)



3. Aug 16, Helitanker water drop impacted firefighters during line construction. Radio communications between ground personnel and aircraft confirmed the line as being clear to drop. Medevac required, transporting two firefighters with unknown injuries.

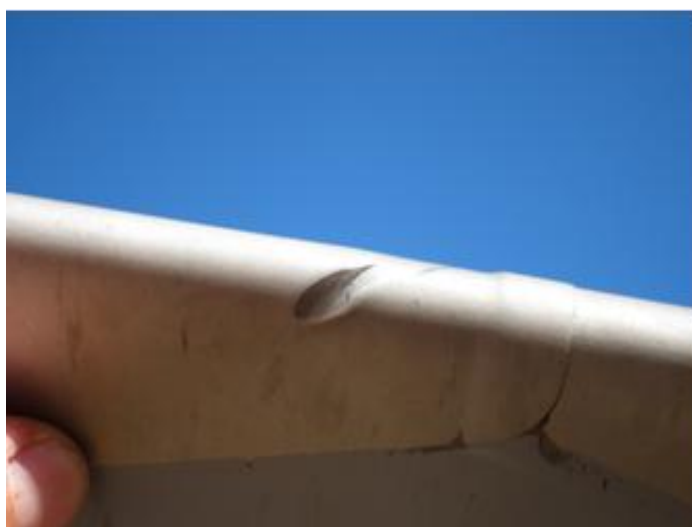
**Lessons Re-learned:** Ensure communications are heard and understood to include: knowing the pilot's intentions, providing concise and accurate target description, confirming target area is clear of all personnel and crew location is secure if rolling or falling debris is dislodged, provide honest and constructive feedback on drops. If drops are unsafe – immediately stop the drops and communicate concerns to the appropriate person.

**Reference:** [Six Minutes for Safety: Retardant, Paracargo & Water Drop Safety, Incident Response Pocket Guide pg. 65, Directing Retardant and Bucket Drops](#) and [Safecom 11-0808](#)



4. Aug 26, Helicopter Rotor Strike during loading/unloading of passenger gear in an external basket on an AS350B2. The HECM noticed a loose saw file in the expanded metal bottom of the external basket; the loose file was tossed away from the aircraft while the blades were turning impacting the leading edge of one main rotor blade. No injuries.

**Lessons Re-learned:** Secure light/loose items awaiting transportation and never toss, throw, fling, pitch, chuck or hurl items around aircraft. Reference: [Incident Response Pocket Guide pg. 54, Tools and equipment.](#) and [Safecom 11-0847](#)



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