

SAFETY ALERT

Date: August 16, 2011

SUBJECT: Crew Carrier Safety Alert

AREAS OF CONCERN:

- **Seat belt use**
- **Seat belt retrofit**
- **Securing cargo**
- **Headlight lens inspection and cleaning**

DISTRIBUTION: Region 5

DISCUSSION: There have been four crew carrier vehicles that have been involved in serious accidents in the last 7 years; the Bitterroot National Forest crew carrier accident (2004), the San Bernardino National Forest Helitak crew carrier accident (2007), the Klamath National Forest (KNF) crew carrier accident (2009) and the Angeles National Forest crew carrier accident (2011).

Although the circumstances leading to each accident were different, serious injuries occurred and seat belts were not being worn in some cases. **Seat belts save lives and help reduce the severity of injury.** Seat belts should be worn low and snug along the hips. After the KNF accident, it was noted that many existing crew carriers were equipped with a ratcheting style seat belt that tightens during use and can be uncomfortable; this may reduce seat belt compliance. The upcoming national standard crew carrier specifications include a manually-adjustable seat belt that does not tighten during use and will assist with seat belt use compliance. Some existing crew carriers may still be equipped with ratcheting style seat belts which can be easily retrofitted with seat belts that meet the upcoming National Standard Crew Carrier specifications. The specifications are as follows:

Seat Belt Specifications:

Meets FMVSS 209

60 inch total belt length:

49 inch adjustable side

11 inch fixed (buckle) side

Push button release buckle

Webbing color: red

Note: lever (aircraft) style buckle is not acceptable



It is important that we remind employees that seat belts shall be worn at all times while a vehicle is in motion. (per FSH 6709.11, state and federal laws) It is important to know and understand federal seatbelt laws. These laws are meant to protect you.

Additionally, all cargo in the cab or crew compartment should be secured when the vehicle is in motion. (i.e., ice chests, cases of water/Gatorade/MRE's, fire line gear, etc). Ensure all gear is inventoried and properly secured when the vehicle is in motion. In many of the past crew carrier accidents unsecured cargo presented an additional hazard.



Finally, it is important that the headlight lenses of crew carriers, or other vehicles, be periodically checked for dullness, scratches or discoloration that could impact lighting and contribute to poor visibility. Headlight lens dullness/discoloration is a common issue with plastic headlight lenses. One of the disadvantages in using plastic for headlight applications is discoloration and hazing effect from weather and ultra violet (UV) light. This discoloration and hazing effect may have an impact on visibility, especially at night. There are many products available that will aid in the removal of discoloration and haze. In some older model vehicles it may prove impossible to get the lens cleaned. If this is the case, please contact your fleet specialist to have them replaced.



(before cleaning)



(after cleaning)