

Fire Helicopter Pilot

Definition:

Under direction of the Supervising Fire Helicopter Pilot, operates helicopters in support of aerial firefighting, emergency medical evacuation and rescue, and fire prevention activities as Pilot in Command (PIC). Incumbents are responsible for the safety-of-flight aspects of helicopter operations.

Incumbents work in adverse high-stress conditions and must effectively respond to unexpected and life-threatening events. Operations may occur at any time of day or night utilizing Night Vision Goggles (NVG). This classification works any shift assignment, including rotating shifts during both day and night, weekends, holidays, and overtime, as well as remaining on standby or on call, as required. Incumbents deploy in remote field environments for extended periods, operating in all varieties of weather conditions.

Essential Functions:

- Operates helicopters in compliance with FAA regulations, aircraft flight manuals, and department standard operating procedures (SOPs);
- Conducts aerial firefighting missions including water/retardant drops, bucket operations, and hover-fill techniques;
- Executes rescue missions in various terrain and weather conditions, including hoist operations;
- Performs precision approaches, confined area landings, pinnacle/rooftop landings, and other advanced maneuvers as required;
- Conducts thorough pre-flight planning including route selection, weather evaluation, fuel management, and risk assessment;
- Completes comprehensive pre-flight and post-flight inspections in accordance with aircraft maintenance programs;
- Ensures all operations meet or exceed department safety standards and FAA Part 91 requirements as applicable;
- Maintains all certifications, qualifications, flight currency, and proficiency required to operate department helicopters;
- Assists in developing and updating pilot syllabi, checklists, and lesson plans for department aircraft operations;
- Serves on the department's Safety Committee, contributes to hazard identification, and assists in root-cause analysis of incidents. Participates in safety briefings, accident prevention programs, and recurrent training;
- Maintains pilot records, training logs, and proficiency check documentation in compliance with FAA and department policy;

- Conducts post-mission reviews to capture operational lessons, performance feedback, and safety notes. Reports hazards, incidents, and near-miss events promptly in accordance with department safety management systems (SMS);
- Performs other job related duties as required.

Employment Standards:**Minimum Qualifications:**

- High School Diploma, G.E.D. or equivalent

Certifications/License:

- Valid FAA Commercial or Airline Transport Pilot's Certificate with a helicopter instrument rating
- Valid and current FAA Class II Medical Certificate issued by an authorized medical examiner (AME)
- Valid California Motor Vehicle Driver's License may be required for some positions
- Current Interagency Pilot Qualification Card within nine (9) months of appointment or be terminated
- Appointees must be certified by the Kern County Fire Department using Night Vision Goggles (NVG) to fly helicopters within nine (9) months of appointment or be terminated

Failure to maintain the certificates, qualifications, flight currency, and proficiency required for the operations of helicopters will result in termination.

Flight experience requirements as a Helicopter Pilot in Command (PIC):

- 2500 hours PIC Helicopter flight time
- 500 hours PIC in mountainous terrain, routinely making takeoffs and landings to unimproved landing areas as density altitudes exceeding 5000' msl
- Night Flight: 100 hours (50 hours NVG aided)

Preferred Qualifications:

- 200 hours as PIC of helicopters carrying sling loads
- Sikorsky UH-60 / S-70 Series: 500 hours
- Bell 412 Series: 500 hours
- Prior firefighting, SAR, EMS, or utility experience in multi-engine helicopters
- Familiarity with ICS (Incident Command System) procedures
- External Load / Long-Line: 100 hours

Knowledge of: Federal Aviation Administration regulations as contained in Section 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (FAA 14 CFR), parts 91, 133, 135, 137; working knowledge of the Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide (IHOG) and the Incident Command System (ICS); Federal Aviation Regulations and Aeronautical Information Manual; FAA, interagency radio procedures; wildland fire behavior and fire weather; rotary wing flight control systems and equipment.

Ability to: Perform essential tasks in compliance with State and Federal laws, county ordinances and department operational policies and procedures; accurately interpret flight operations manuals to determine appropriate flight operation characteristics, limitations and operation/performance capabilities of the helicopter; compute weight and balance/load calculations for a variety of standard and non-standard load conditions; properly and safely recover from inadvertent instrument meteorological conditions; safely and correctly operate helicopters in all terrain conditions including desert, mountain and urban areas, and at or near maximum gross weight; operate and maintain as a member of a team and independently at incidents of uncertain duration; pilot helicopters using night vision goggles; effectively communicate with ground and other air resources on all types of incidents; operate complex helicopter navigational and communications equipment; prepare clear, accurate and concise reports related to air operations; adopt effective and timely courses of action when confronted with hazards or emergency situations; properly perform all emergency procedures associated with helicopters and anticipate operational needs; work effectively with other agencies, co-workers and the public.

Supplemental:

A background check may be conducted for this classification.

All Kern County employees are designated "Disaster Service Workers" through state and local laws (CA Government Code Sec.3100-3109 and Ordinance Code Title 2-Administration, Ch. 2.66 Emergency Services). As Disaster Service Workers, all County employees are expected to remain at work, or to report for work as soon as practicable, following a significant emergency or disaster.