

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

**Reference Manual #60: Aviation Management**

**Chapter 10 – NPS Flight Authority, Crewed Aircraft  
Operations**

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## 10 NPS Flight Authority, Crewed Aircraft Operations

### 10.1 General

OAS provides flight authority to operate and utilize DOI-owned, contracted, or cooperator aircraft.

When training or hiring NPS pilots, managers must carefully consider the risks, position qualifications, ongoing training requirements, and fiscal requirements associated with fleet aircraft and pilot operations when making a hiring decision. Managers will consult with the appropriate RAM and national aviation managers, as well as human resource specialists when hiring pilots.

Managers must use the NPS Aviation Program's [Pilot Hiring Checklists](#) to determine the minimum skills and hours required for the operations performed by the unit hiring the pilot. These checklists are found on [InsideNPS](#) or by contacting the National Aviation Office. There are some differences regarding recent flight time requirements for those individuals hired from outside the federal government vs. those hired from within. Please contact your RAM and HR representative for further guidance.

Prior to a final offer of employment by human resources for an NPS pilot position, the hiring official must work with the appropriate national aviation program manager to:

1. Complete the requirements per [351 DM 3](#) for an FAA Accident/Incident and Enforcement Action History.
2. Examine the applicant's logbook/military training records for qualifying flight and PIC time.
3. Ensure that a successful pre-employment flight evaluation has been administered and the results are documented.
4. Ensure that applicants with military pilot experience complete an FAA Military Competency Knowledge Test and present an appropriate FAA pilot certificate.

**NOTE:** If an applicant is not an authorized DOI pilot, authorization must be obtained to manipulate the controls of DOI aircraft from the appropriate OAS regional director. This must occur prior to an applicant being administered a pre-employment flight evaluation. Contact the appropriate national program manager for assistance.

### 10.2 NPS Flight Authority Authorization

The NAM will issue an NPS Flight Authority Letter for all NPS pilots recognizing the individual is authorized to fly for the NPS. Once issued, the letter remains in effect for the duration of the pilot's NPS career. NPS flight authority can be suspended or revoked by the NAM following an accident, an incident with potential, or actions that result in convening an NPS Pilot Evaluation Board. See Appendix 10, *NPS Pilot Evaluation Board*.

#### 10.2.1 Technical Oversight of NPS Pilots

The technical oversight of NPS pilots rests with the RAM. In the event the RAM lacks the expertise, the oversight is delegated to an NAO technical specialist (e.g., the appropriate national aviation management specialist). At parks with PAMs, this oversight can be provided by the PAM with RAM concurrence.

This oversight is exercised to ensure a safe and professional aviation program and service. The oversight applies only to the employee's aviation duties. Technical oversight consists of, but is not limited to:

1. Initial hiring.
2. Design and development of aviation training.
3. Advisement of flight operations (e.g., mission planning).
4. DOI fleet aircraft management skills to include:
  - a. Aircraft use reports.
  - b. Aircraft maintenance.
  - c. Fuel management.
5. Input to the pilot's annual performance appraisal.

### **10.2.2 Technical Oversight of USPP Pilots**

The technical oversight of USPP pilots rests with the Chief Pilot, USPP Aviation Commander, and Assistant Commander. This oversight is exercised to ensure a safe and professional aviation program and service. Technical oversight consists of, but is not limited to:

1. Selection for participation in the Pilot Training Program.
2. Monitoring and evaluation of the selected employee's progress in the Pilot Training Program.
3. Oversight of all flight operations.
4. Ensuring compliance with applicable guidelines and regulations.
5. Ensuring compliance with all ongoing training requirements.
6. Identifying and addressing any issues affecting aircraft operations.
7. Providing input to the pilot's annual performance appraisal as appropriate.

## **10.3 NPS GS-2181 Pilots**

GS-2181 pilots meet the following criteria:

1. Piloting aircraft is the primary duty and comprises more than 50 percent of the employee's duties.
2. Position descriptions are classified in the 2181 (pilot) series.

Pilots in the 2181 series must meet all DOI criteria for flight authorization, currency, and flight check requirements listed in [351 DM 3](#) that apply to the operations they will perform.

The following minimum amount of flight hours must be accomplished prior to hiring:

1. 1500 hours total flight time.
2. 1200 hours PIC in specific aircraft category.
3. Additional minimum requirements apply, see the NPS Aviation Program's [Pilot Hiring Checklists](#).

## 10.4 NPS Dual Function Pilots

Dual function pilots must meet the following criteria:

1. Piloting duties are stated in the employee's position description.
2. Piloting aircraft is not the primary duty and comprises less than 50 percent of the employee's duties.
3. Positions are typically classified into the appropriate law enforcement and biological sciences job series.
4. The following minimum number of flight hours must be accomplished prior to hiring:
  - a. 500 hours PIC in specific aircraft category.
  - b. Additional minimum requirements apply, see the NPS Aviation Program [Pilot Hiring Checklists](#).

### 10.4.1 Dual Function Pilots with Less Than 1,000 Hours PIC

Dual function pilots with less than 1,000 hours PIC are required to have written approval from the RAM and NAM prior to flight evaluation for off-airport (airplane) or low-level operations.

## 10.5 Incidental Pilots

The NPS does not recognize incidental pilot duties as described in [351 DM 3](#). NPS employees conducting pilot operations, other than under the Federal Travel Regulations, will have those duties included in their position descriptions.

## 10.6 Auxiliary Pilots

Auxiliary pilots are volunteers or contractors, not government employees. They may serve as a pilot of DOI aircraft per [OPM-34, Auxiliary Pilots-Crewed Aircraft](#). Flight evaluations per [351 DM 3](#) apply.

## 10.7 Developmental Pilot Program for Dual Function Pilots

It is prohibited for a park to fund any portion of flight training, including salary until an employee has been formally accepted into the NPS developmental pilot training program by the NAM. This policy does not prohibit an employee from pursuing flight training on their personal time. A park or region can contribute funds to OAS via an Interagency Agreement for developmental pilot training flight time costs in DOI aircraft but can only be utilized by an employee who has been accepted into the developmental pilot program.

Requests for an employee to enter the NPS developmental pilot training program designed to develop them as a dual function pilot in lieu of [351 DM 3](#) will follow the procedures outlined in [OPM-22](#). This

request will be initiated in writing through the program manager or superintendent to the RAM for approval from the NAM. If approved, a training plan will be developed, instructor pilot availability will be confirmed, a mentor pilot will be assigned, and adequate funding will be ensured for the pilot's training development.

The following information must be included in the request:

1. Pilot's name.
2. Copy of [FAA pilot certificate](#).
3. Copy of [FAA medical certificate](#).
4. Resume of pilot experience and background, and a completed [OAS 64D](#).
5. Personal statement from the employee explaining their interests and goals to support NPS as a pilot.
6. Type of aircraft the pilot is to be qualified to fly.
7. Missions that will be flown outlined in [OPM-22](#).
8. Name of the PAM or supervisors, their required training currency per [OPM-04](#), and the level of supervisory oversight they will provide to the flight operation.
9. Complete the requirements per [351 DM 3](#) for an FAA Accident/Incident and Enforcement Action History.

#### **10.7.1 Developmental Pilot Program Requirements**

The park initiates a request through the RAM to the NAM for entry into the NPS developmental pilot program. Approval to manipulate the controls is required from the appropriate OAS regional director prior to a flight evaluation. In addition, the pilot must meet the following minimum requirements before being considered for the NPS developmental pilot program:

1. Hold an FAA commercial pilot certificate in category with instrument rating.
2. Possess a current FAA Class II medical certificate.
3. Pass an FAA or military pilot record check.
4. Receive an initial flight assessment conducted by a DOI Instructor Pilot (IP) for basic skills and aptitudes in accordance with [351 DM 3](#).
5. Have their logbooks/military records reviewed for qualifying time by RAM or NAM.

#### **10.7.2 Developmental Pilot Curriculum**

The NPS national fixed wing or rotor wing specialist, RAM, and/or appropriate Regional Aviation Trainer (RAT) develops the training curriculum for the pilot candidate with committed funding and timeline concurrence. Training curriculum and timeline can be delegated to the RAT, or a DOI-approved instructor pilot.

Upon concurrence, the RAM and NAM will request the pilot candidate be authorized to manipulate the controls of a DOI aircraft via the appropriate OAS regional director. A copy

of this authorization will be sent by the NAO to the appropriate RAM, pilot's supervisor, and instructor pilot.

## **10.8 United States Park Police – Pilot Training Program**

The USPP Pilot Training Program establishes a standardized process for selecting, training, and evaluating internal candidates for the position of USPP Pilot. The program builds upon practical flight and mission experience developed as candidates and serve as USPP Rescue Technicians. Additionally, USPP Officers may be selected for the pilot training program provided they meet OAS requirements. Candidates are selected for the program based on demonstrated interest and aptitude. Selection for, and continued participation in, the program requires the approval of the USPP Aviation Commander and the USPP Chief Pilot. Candidates must be approved by the appropriate OAS regional director prior to manipulating the controls of any DOI aircraft.

## **10.9 Medical Certificates**

Pilots will maintain a minimum Class II FAA medical certificate; pilots who fail to maintain an FAA Class II medical certificate or higher are not authorized to manipulate the controls of DOI aircraft or act as PIC for flight operations.

## **10.10 Request for NPS Fleet Pilot Approval and Flight Evaluations**

Request for flight evaluation for pilot approval must be routed through the RAM to OAS to maximize the DOI-approved inspector pilot's time and availability.

## **10.11 NPS Instructor Pilot**

NPS instructor pilots (IP), when providing instruction in DOI aircraft, must be authorized by the NAM by a Letter of Authorization, which will be included in the pilot's DOI pilot file. NPS IP are:

1. Responsible and authorized to provide flight and ground instruction.
2. Act as PIC of the aircraft anytime a developmental pilot is on board the aircraft.
3. Authorized to provide written endorsements (e.g., in the pilot's logbook and/or on OAS Forms 50/51) and certifications in the FAA Integrated Airman Certification and Rating Application system for new ratings.

### **10.11.1 Instructor Pilot Qualifications**

DOI flight-instruction duty should be documented in the employee's job description as a secondary or tertiary responsibility relative to the primary flying duty. NPS instructor pilots must:

1. Hold and maintain a current FAA Certified Flight Instructor pilot certificate with appropriate ratings.
2. Be current and carded as PIC in the aircraft when providing training to include initial qualification, special use activities, or configuration training.

3. Be recommended in writing by their RAM and approved by the NAM. Nomination and approval documentation must be forwarded to OAS headquarters for inclusion in the pilot's permanent records.
4. Successfully complete an initial one-time OAS flight evaluation while flying in the instructor position. Depending on the type of aircraft that will be used during flight instruction, the evaluation is conducted in an aircraft with side-by-side cockpit seating or from the rear seat for tandem aircraft.

### **10.11.2 Instructor Pilot Privileges and Limitations**

The instructor pilot is authorized to:

1. Provide initial flight and ground training to DOI pilots who are not currently carded in the aircraft.
2. Provide recurrent flight training to DOI pilots.
3. Train fleet pilots to perform special use activities for which the instructor pilot is currently authorized. Instructor pilots must not provide training on any special use activities for which the instructor is not current and qualified.
4. Provide written endorsements and/or recommendations for fleet pilots to receive initial OAS aircraft flight evaluations.
5. Provide recommendations to the DOI pilot and the pilot's supervisor when additional training or a different approach is advised.
6. Instruct OAS-approved pinch-hitter courses in accordance with [351 DM 1](#).
7. Perform flight reviews of DOI pilots to satisfy the requirements of [14 C.F.R. § 61.56](#).
8. Endorse applicants for new pilot certifications in the FAA's Integrated Airman Certification and Rating Application.

### **10.11.3 Renewal or Reinstatement of Instructor Pilot Privileges**

1. Instructor pilot authorization is valid for two years based on FAA CFI timeline requirements.
2. Renewal or reinstatement of instructor status must be approved by the NAM.

### **10.11.4 Suspension or Revocation of Instructor Pilot Privileges**

Should it become necessary to suspend or revoke an NPS IP designation, the NAM will inform the IP in writing with a notification to the appropriate OAS regional director in which the pilot was carded. Suspension or revocation of NPS IP authority automatically prohibits the IP from providing instruction in a DOI aircraft to any DOI pilot or developmental pilot.

Suspending or revoking NPS IP authority does not affect the IP's FAA CFI certification, however, FAA CFI status does not allow the IP to instruct without the NAM's NPS IP authorization while on duty.

## 10.12 NPS Pilot Evaluation Board (PEB)

The NPS PEB is an administrative, fact-finding proceeding conducted to ensure all information relevant to a pilot's qualifications is reviewed and evaluated in a knowledgeable, fair, and impartial manner. The NPS PEB, found in Appendix 10, *NPS Pilot Evaluation Board* is an internal NPS process to determine an NPS pilot's or developmental pilot's fitness for duty based on the identification of a serious safety concern, an accident, or an incident with potential or employment or performance-based concern that indicates they are potentially unfit to perform duties as an NPS pilot.

**Note:** The NPS PEB does not include circumstances that are under an OAS-convened DOI Pilot Review Board found [351 DM 3](#). The PEB is not meant to replace any supervisory performance or conduct review effort.

Under some circumstances, such as a recommendation from an Aviation Mishap Review Board, OAS may be requested to convene a DOI Pilot Review Board or choose to do so on their own as outlined in [OPM-24, Pilot Review Board](#).

## 10.13 Pilot Suspension/Revocation

DOI Pilot Qualification Card will be suspended by OAS after an aircraft accident, mishap, or incident with potential. Failure of the pilot to conform to prescribed DOI standards may result in suspension or revocation of the DOI Pilot Qualification Card. If applicable, the NAO will also concurrently suspend or revoke the NPS pilot's Flight Letter of Authorization.

The process for the NAM to request suspension or revocation of a DOI Pilot Qualification Card is contained in [351 DM 3](#). Under some circumstances, such as a recommendation from an Aviation Mishap Review Board, OAS may be requested to convene a DOI PRB or choose to do so on their own as outlined in [OPM-24](#). The revocation, suspension, and re-issuing process for DOI pilot authorization is outlined in the DOI Flight Crewmember policy [351 DM 3](#). If the NAM has suspended or revoked the NPS pilot's flight Letter of Authorization, an updated Letter of Authorization may be reissued after appropriate measures have been completed.