

Equipment and Procedure Development Process

1. Objectives

- a. Increase the quality and efficiency of rappel equipment development work and reduce development costs.
- b. Properly balance input and participation in the equipment development process by rappel bases, Technology and Development (T & D) Centers and State, Regional, and Washington Office Management.
- c. Identify priorities for T & D Centers' development work by systematically identifying priority rappel problems that can be solved by equipment development.
- d. Clearly identify procedures and items of rappel equipment for standardization to facilitate interregional exchange of rappellers, increase safety, and maximize efficiency.
- e. Clearly identify operational procedures and technical requirements for each item of equipment in advance of development work.

2. Tech Services

Tech services is a generic T & D term used to describe inquiries into technical matters that occasionally arise, such as investigating manufacturing flaws or equipment failures. A small amount of money is budgeted each year in anticipation that unforeseen events will occasionally surface that need immediate and expert attention. The primary distinction between regularly funded projects and tech service issues is that tech service issues generally:

1. Need a quick answer or resolution
2. Are not funded through the normal Fire and Aviation Management Steering Committee process.
3. Do not generally require large amounts of work/money to resolve.

If upon investigation a tech service issue turns out to be more complex or costly than originally anticipated, it may be assigned to a project and funded through the Fire and Aviation Management Steering Committee or other avenues.

3. Approved Process

Outlined below is the formal process for obtaining the necessary approval and technical support for helicopter rappellers to propose new or improved equipment and/or procedures.

- a. When a field user perceives a need for a new or improved piece of equipment or procedure, documentation of that need must be submitted to the Rappel Equipment and Procedures Committee (REPC) through the regional/area REPC representative using the Rappel Equipment/Procedures form, (Forms are available on the Helicopter Rappel Website listed at the beginning of Chapter 3, or through your Regional REPC Representative) where it will be evaluated based on the above objectives and the following criteria:
 - i. Critical Safety
 - ii. Interagency Standardization
 - iii. Priority
 - iv. Probability of success
- b. Using the above criteria, the IHREPC will evaluate the proposal and send a recommendation with reasons for supporting or rejecting the proposal to the Interagency Rappel Working Group. The Chair of the IHREPC will notify the submitter of the disposition.
- c. After evaluating the proposal, if the RWG concurs that the proposal has potential merit, the proposal is approved and if necessary forwarded to IHOPS.

Note: Prior to any field evaluation, written approval must be obtained by the RWG from the appropriate agency official (example: USFS National Aviation Officer).

- d. If a proposal is accepted, it will follow one of the paths outlined below:
 - i. If the proposal is a change in procedure or an “off-the-shelf” piece of equipment that does not require extensive testing and development, it will receive the appropriate engineering test and/or review in coordination with appropriate agency equipment specialist.
 - ii. If the proposal requires a major equipment development effort (i.e., engineering design, drawings, testing, etc.) the IHRWG will forward the proposal to IHOP’s. IHOP’s will evaluate the proposal based on the above mentioned criteria and if approved, take the necessary steps to secure funding for the project. Once funding is assigned, the design, engineering and development work is performed under the direction of the appropriate agency equipment specialist.
- e. Upon a successful evaluation the equipment will be formally approved.