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INFO CONTACT CERTIFICATION BRANCH, AAS-314; 8.267-8729

DATE: 30 OCTOBER 1992

NO. : 92-04

TO: AIRPORT CERTIFICATION PROGRAM INSPECTORS

TOPIC: Update on the use of HALON 1211 for Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) Purposes

Previous information on this topic was issued as CERTALERT NO. 89-04 dated 02/03/89, TOPIC: CURBS ON USAGE AND EMISSIONS OF HALONS And CHLOROFLUROCARBONS.

This Certalert supplements NO. 89-04 by offering additional information on the uses of Halon 1211 as a fire suppression agent for ARFF services at airports.

As a reminder, you will recall that the United States is a signer of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The parties to that multinational agreement are meeting in November 1992. They are to decide on the phaseout of Halons by January 1994 and ChloroFluoroCarbons (CFCs) and other ozone depleting substances by January 1996. Provisions of the protocol also call for phaseout of production of Halons by 1999. However, it is expected that an outcome of this meeting will be that some exceptions may be granted for "essential uses" (undefined) of Halons.

However, in light of these activities and with the cooperation of the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) , here are some guidelines and recommendations on the status of Halon 1211 for ARFF uses.

1. The Montreal Protocol calls for the elimination of production of Halons, not the use of Halons. Use of existing Halon supplies and "banked" Halons is permitted. The EPA and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) are working with the fire protection industry to encourage Halon recycling and banking.
2. Voluntary reductions in the use of Halon 1211 are expected to produce a worldwide surplus of this agent in the future.

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While a "bank" is not yet in place, the technology to reclaim surplus Halons exists commercially. Recycled agents should be cleaned to existing industry standards of purity.

Note: The EPA and FAA are working with national and international civilian and military standards making organizations to modify these standards. The modifications are expected to allow uses of nitrogen and other noncondensable gasses in recycled Halons as necessary ingredients for pressurizing systems that must use Halon as a fire suppression agent.

3. Taxes imposed on newly manufactured Halons will not apply to recycled Halons.
4. No new chemical substitute for Halon 1211 is approved by the EPA and acceptable to the FAA for aircraft fire protection purposes : Research is underway on alternative clean fire suppression agents for critical uses. Meanwhile the existing fire suppression agents: carbon dioxide, foams, and sodium or potassium based dry chemicals are acceptable for use on aircraft fires.
5. In light of the protocol, airport managements should give careful consideration to the need for Halons when purchasing, rehabilitating and servicing ARFF vehicles. Until alternatives for Halons are found acceptable, select sodium or potassium based dry chemicals over Halons to meet ARFF requirements. Whenever Halon 1211 is justified as the only acceptable suppression agent, use recycled Halons only.
6. Eliminate any unnecessary discharges of Halons. This can include, but is not be limited to, replacing or removing Halons as fire suppression agents, closely monitoring Halon systems for leaks, installing leak-free valves, training with alternative agents, and using alternative agents whenever Halons are not the required extinguishing agent.

More specifics on this topic can be obtained from the:

Federal Aviation Administration, Office of Airport Safety and Standards,
Design and Operations Division, AAS-100,
800 Independence Ave, SW, Washington D.C. 20591,
Telephone: 202 267 3446.

Or the

U.S. Environmental Protection Administration, Office of Air and
Radiation Global Change Division, Stratospheric Ozone Protection
Branch, SNAP Program Coordinator, Mail Drop 2, 501 3rd Street,
NW, Washington, D.C. 20001,
Telephone : 202 233 9195.

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