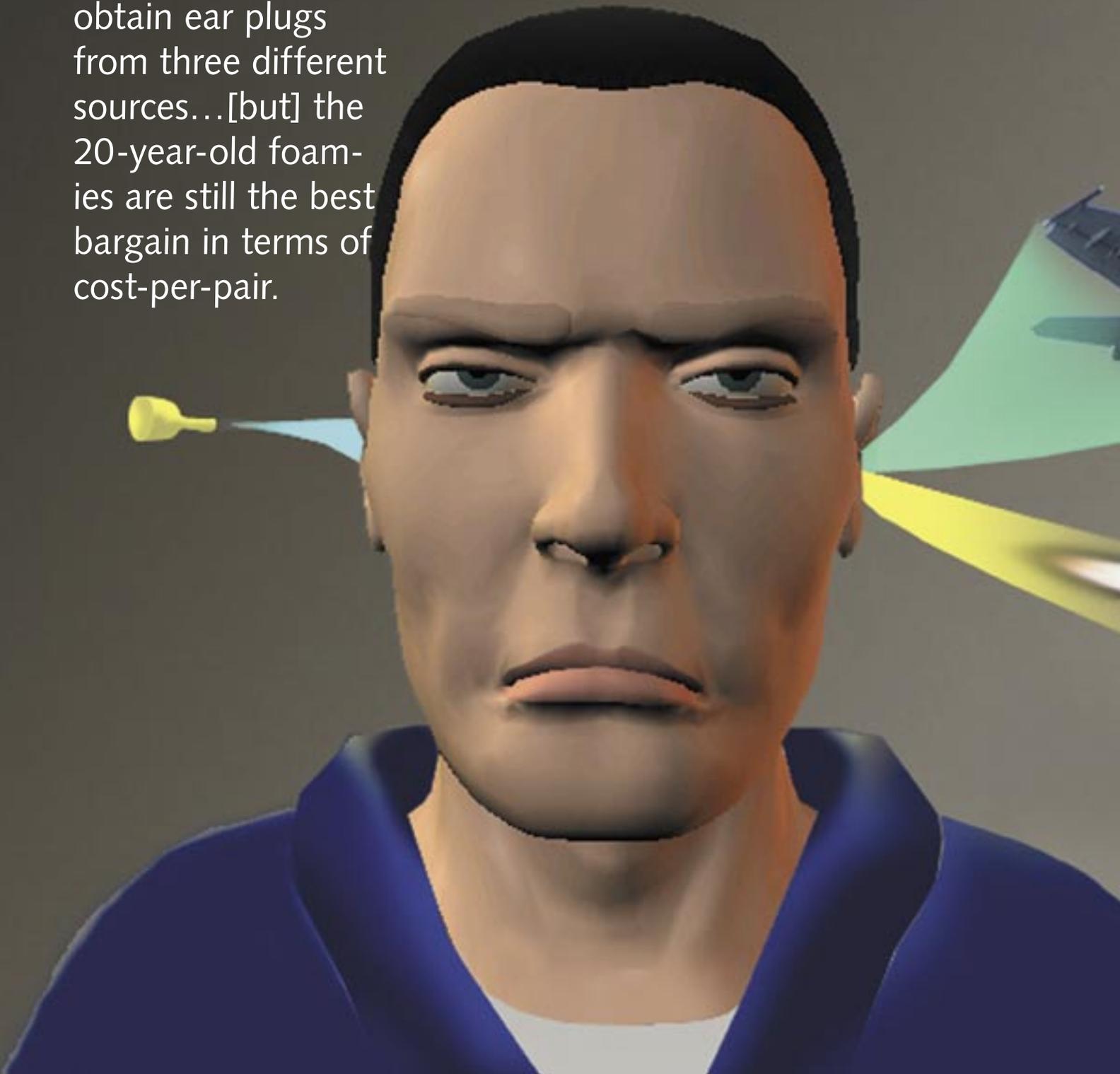


# New Ear Plugs *Are* Now

The fleet now can obtain ear plugs from three different sources...[but] the 20-year-old foamies are still the best bargain in terms of cost-per-pair.



# Available



Illustration by DM1(AW) Eulogio Devera, USS *Nimitz*

The fleet now can obtain ear plugs from three different sources, depending on how quickly the ear plugs are needed and availability. While each type of plug has unique features, the 20-year-old foamies are still the best bargain in terms of cost-per-pair.

The Navy Environmental Health Center's hearing conservation team has found an acceptable alternative to the 20-year-old Navy standard, foam ear plugs. The new plugs are available through the supply system.

The replacements are described as universal-fit, polyvinyl chloride (PVC) ear plugs and come as two-color (orange-green), disposable ear inserts. The orange portion is inserted and, when properly done, only the plug's green portion is visible. The manufacturer, New Dynamics, is marketing them under the Sound Guard name.

These two-color plugs can be ordered with national stock number (NSN) 6515-00-137-6345. They come in dispenser boxes of 200 individually boxed pairs, and a case of 1,000 sells for \$185. When correctly worn, the plugs have a 19.1-decibel noise-reduction rating.

During evaluation, these universal-fit plugs really did not provide adequate protection for some people—the plugs were too large or small for some ear canals. The hearing conservation team, therefore, suggested two substitute, PVC foam-based plugs. These plugs are marketed directly by Tactical and Survival Specialties, Inc., since the plugs are not standard stock items. They can be ordered through GSA, using contract number GS-07F-9123D and the respective part numbers. For small ears, the part number is 1241-310-1009 and the nomenclature is EAR classic superfit-30. A case of 2,000 pairs costs \$240. For large ears, use part number 1241-310-1008 and nomenclature EAR classic superfit-33. These plugs also come with 2,000 pairs per case, which costs \$252.

These new plugs and substitutes for small or large ear canals feature wearing ease, availability, and water-resistant material to reduce contaminant-absorption. They also meet ANSI and OSHA standards, making them attractive alternatives. However, new foamies are not cheap. The 20-year-old standard foam ear plugs still cost less and, when correctly worn, still can be as effective as newer replacements.

The standard, universal ear plug ordering information is NSN 6515-01-137-6345 and nomenclature of Foam Plastic Ear Plug. A case of 4,000 pairs costs \$288. The cost savings averages five cents per pair of old foam plastic ear plugs when compared to the cost of newer plugs. The standard ear plug also has a higher 29-decibel noise-reduction rating. ☺