



# Admiral's CORNER

FROM COMMANDER, NAVAL SAFETY CENTER



## Using Old Approaches for New Solutions

**Mech** celebrates 45 years of service to the fleet this year, and it's a tribute to the hard work from concerned maintainers like those who read and submit articles for the magazine. You have shared your stories of blood, sweat and tears that have kept other Sailors and Marines from learning lessons the hard way. Your efforts to work smarter, suggest improvements to equipment and programs, and make a difference in safety have helped to reduce mishaps dramatically over the past 45 years.

Back in 1961, when *Mech* first was published, we lost 57 aircraft, five people, and spent \$15 million where maintenance error was a causal factor. Although the highest dollar cost then and now is attributable to aircraft mishaps from pilot error, a higher number of mishaps in 1961 were attributable to material failure and bad maintenance. In fact, 10 percent of all mishaps involved maintenance error in 1961. In FY05, no deaths and only two mishaps or 3.9 percent involved maintenance error, but the cost was \$23 million.

Since 1980, more than \$10 billion in mishaps have happened because of aviator-related causal factors. Maintenance-related ones

have cost the Navy and Marine Corps more than \$2 billion. You can see the point I'm getting at. Although many people focus on aviator-related mishaps, as we should, maintenance-related ones can't be shrugged off as insignificant. We've made tremendous progress over the years, but mishaps continue to take lives, injure maintainers, and cost us a lot of money. We can't concentrate solely on one category at the expense of other areas because we'll miss a large chunk of the fleet. Two billion dollars is a significant amount, and I need each of you to continue working to reduce and eliminate these mishaps.

Maintainers historically have found solutions to problems faced at work. I need each of you to take home with you the risk management lessons learned at work to mitigate PMV, recreational and off-duty mishaps. Too many Sailors and Marines die each year in these categories. In FY06, off-duty mishaps are at a 17-year high—a trend headed in the wrong direction. You can make a difference in this area.

One last point about off-duty mishaps: The poster on the facing page reminds us that the

Critical Days of Summer, running from Memorial Day to Labor Day, will start soon. Historically, this is a notorious time for mishaps because of an increase in outdoor activities.

I want every Sailor, Marine and civilian to think about the activities they'll be involved in. Use risk management: Ask yourself what's the worst thing that could happen while doing any activity, and build a plan to keep you, your families, and your shipmates safe.

How would they react if something happened to you? Ask yourself what you can do to avoid causing unwanted sorrow to your families.

Have a good time, do the right things, and avoid poor decisions. Make it through the summer, get home to visit families and friends, but return safely to your command and shipmates. We need you back alive!

RADM George Mayer

### WESS Improvements Underway:

The WESS BRT (barrier removal team) has been listening to fleet feedback and is working on several initiatives to make the system better. A list of common-problem areas is available on the Naval Safety Center website at <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/articles/n-z/WESS-BRT-tackling.htm>. Visit the site to find simple answers to common questions, check what might help make your WESS experience better, or see if an issue you're having already is being reviewed.