

Too Many Senseless Mishaps and Injuries



By RADM Dick Brooks

During the past several months, we've discussed and continually stressed two critical factors necessary to meet our mishap-reduction goal: top-down leadership and improving our safety culture. As the first year of the two-year plan ends, we have made some progress but still are short of the mark. Close is good, but more work needs to be done.

The first year isn't quite over, and we have time to make improvements. That said, our current stats have some "goods" and "bads." Using a glide-slope analogy, we find the numbers show we are:

Below (good):

- Navy Class A Flight Mishaps
- Navy Class A Afloat Mishaps
- Navy Class A Shore Operational Mishaps
- Marine Corps PMV Fatalities
- Marine Corps Shore Operational Class A Mishaps

Above (Bad):

- Navy Military Shore/Recreation Fatalities
- Marine Corps Shore/Recreation Fatalities
- Navy Military PMV fatalities
- Marine Corps Class Class A Flight Mishaps
- Navy Class B Flight Mishaps

These numbers show that we can't let down our guard in any area, and this summer issue has several stories that deal with irritating and common subjects: well-intentioned maintainers who either deliberately or unintentionally did not wear safety equipment or did not follow written procedures. Either way, too many folks are hurt, and too many aircraft and equipment get damaged. Leadership must step up to the plate to end these senseless incidents.

The "Work Zone" article is a good example. How many maintainers come to work and say, "I think I'll

cut some safety wire and get it stuck in my eye?" How many folks who have lost their vision thought (before an incident), "This is a good day to poke out an eye," or "I think I'll blind myself with some hazmat." No one thinks that way. Most people believe they are invincible, and any incident will happen to the other guy. If you think that way, you may very well be the next victim.

An accident occurs when you have taken all the steps to prevent one, but it still happens. Good prevention techniques, including an ORM review, will prevent most of these types of injuries. I don't know about you, but it seems easy to wear goggles anytime you might get something in your eye.

This issue also explores the senseless and repeated problems with dropped drop-tanks. I've heard all the horror stories about the "thump test" or maintainers who "inadvertently" blew a tank off a station. This, again, is an area where leadership must be involved. We know it takes only a few minutes to pop a fuel cap, do a dip check, and replace the cap. Yet, four or five times a year, we drop tanks. No maintainer deliberately does a wire check and thinks, "OK...hit the switch, I know we'll blow the tank." But good Sailors and Marines, perhaps a little tired...maybe a little rushed, do it several times each year.

We owe our Sailors and Marines a review of safety procedures before undertaking any task. That brief must contain the worst-case scenario, and our ORM review should dictate the steps necessary to avoid or to reduce those risks.

The Navy and Marine Corps are challenged to reduce mishaps 50 percent in two years. We are working hard at that task, but we never will lower our mishap rates across the board, unless we follow the rules, wear our PPE, and watch out for our shipmates and fellow Marines. That focus must exist on and off duty.

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