

during FOD walkdowns. Everyone must understand that the walkdown process is merely a means to collect information to determine how to proceed with a prevention program, and it is only as valuable as the information gleaned from examining the FOD collected. A critical eye examining the material collected during FOD walkdowns should determine its origin. Then push those findings down to the deck plates to emphasize proper housekeeping. Young maintainers must understand where FOD originates in order to successfully prevent it from migrating to the flight deck and flight line. They must understand the monetary and manpower costs relative to the organization and make sure the prevention process mitigates the risks.

Producing Positive Outcomes

The answer to the question, “What costs will the command afford in terms of losses in readiness attributed to FODs?” is “none.” We established an aggressive fastener-integrity program, improved housekeeping, and have not experienced a single FOD from loose, faulty or missing fasteners. Aircrew, QA, maintenance control, and work-center leadership communicate the risks and are fully engaged in the prevention process. This increased awareness and proactive approach has mitigated the hazards and reduced engine replacement and maintenance man-hour costs.

These steps, along with all-hands participation, are critical for effective prevention. We have reduced our FOD occurrences 50 percent over the previous year and aligned our efforts to eliminate the risk of FODs completely in the year to come. It proves a squadron can follow the book, improve safety procedures, and still continue to operate at the tip of the spear. ✈️

Lt. Turner was the MMCO when this story was written. CWO4 Ron Stebbins assisted Lt. Turner and recently reported to the Naval Safety Center.

WESS BRT NEWS

Information on WESS is available on the Naval Safety Center website (www.safetycenter.navy.mil/wess). Visit and see stories, FAQs and videos on efforts to improve this valuable and required program.

Day the L

By AM2 Michael Holthaus

My whole world turned black one sunny day around 1330. I was on my hands and knees, feeling around to figure out how to get out from under a turning jet and wondering if I could see. I never have been so scared.

I had been called to one of our jets because hydraulic fluid was all over the port keel. The team got set up for a low-power turn. After a little investigation, I found the leak, which, to tell the truth, was in an awkward place. We shut down the jet and did the necessary fixes.

I set up for another turn, and, to my dismay, the leak came back. In a moment of divine wisdom, I grabbed a wrench and decided to see if I could stop the flow. I probably don't have to remind anyone, but a charged line is pressurized to 3,000 psi. At the time, I was wearing dark lenses and barely could see, so I kicked back my goggles—like so many maintainers do at one time or another. What a big mistake!

With my face just 10 inches away from the spot where I was working, I pushed up on the wrench, and the line sheared, causing a large shot of hydraulic mist to blow back in my face, engulfing my head. My eyes shut instantly. I started to fall backward and then to the side. I jumped back up and motioned for the plane captain to shut down the aircraft. The plane captain was stunned, so I tried again to signal for shut down. At this



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Working under an aircraft without goggles or a cranial can be very dangerous.

Navy photo by PH3 Aaron Burden

point, I began to crawl out from under the aircraft when I felt a shipmate grab me. He was pulling me in the right direction and asking me if I was all right. At that point, I couldn't see and thought I was blind.

I was wearing a radio headset, so I called the flight-deck chief and told him I needed him now! Suddenly, the radio crackled, "Man down base! We need an ambulance!" The plane captain and chief stood me up and led me toward the hangar. It took 100 or so steps to reach the hangar and seemed to take forever. I could hear the diesel engines of the fire truck and ambulance, I remember thinking, "Wow, they got here fast." I then was led to the eyewash station and started to flush out my eyes.

For those who never have used one in the Pacific Northwest, the water is freezing! They had me wash my eyes for what seemed like an eternity. The corpsman

asked me for my name, rank and where I was, checking for shock. They then looked at my eyes and wiped off my face.

After a quick check, they loaded me into an ambulance and took me to a hospital. As I sat there, the adrenaline began to wear off, and I began to realize how close I had come to serious injury. Reflecting on the incident, I realize I might never have seen my son or watched my wife sleep again. I also might not ever have been able to see my unborn child.

I learned a very valuable lesson that day: PPE can protect you but only if you wear it. No matter how small the leak or how easy the task, wear goggles. You only have one set of eyes, and nothing is worth risking your sight. 🦋

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