

Failure to Prevent

By AM2 Rafael Nicasio

It was a sunny Friday morning at HSC-3, located on beautiful Naval Air Station North Island. Our squadron just had moved into a brand new building, and, although it was complete, construction still was being done in adjacent buildings. A fence had been erected to separate the construction area from our maintenance area. However, that fence had only one gate through which all construction traffic had to pass, and it opened directly into the squadron's maintenance area.

Around 0800, I was told to preserve Landslide 00, one of our MH-60S helicopters. To complete the assigned maintenance, I grabbed an AM3 and went to get the job done. To our surprise, the aircraft was parked next to the construction gate and in the same spot from



Helicopter was parked near an area where trucks entered and exited a construction site.



The damage could easily have been prevented.

a Crunch



Navy photo by PH2 Daniel Mennuto

where we had moved one just a day earlier. We knew that the last aircraft had been moved at the request of the construction company. They wanted more clearance between their trucks and our bird. Despite this fact, we had a job to do, and they hadn't said anything about this new aircraft.

We were busy placing barrier paper on the tail cone of aircraft when I noticed a large truck arriving with a small bulldozer in tow. The truck began moving adjacent to the construction site entrance and parallel to our aircraft. We did not pay enough attention to the truck until it started a sharp turn, bringing the trailer closer to the aircraft. The bulldozer on the trailer had two long poles sticking up vertically, and they were close to the aircraft's blade. I signaled to get AM3's attention. As the truck moved closer, I realized a collision with the blade was inevitable, so I yelled at the truck driver to stop. As he hit his brakes, one of the poles struck a blade-tip cap and caused the blade to compress. Immediately after impact, we heard a loud noise, and a piece of the cap broke off, catching everyone's attention.

We notified the maintenance chief and officer. Before we knew it, safety was snapping pictures of the scene. I felt bad for the truck driver because I thought

he would face consequences for his actions, but I knew he should have been more careful. We also could have done more to manage this risk. The helicopter never should have been parked in that location, especially considering the move we had made the day before. Perhaps the word had not been communicated effectively between shifts. If we had to park the bird there, we should have roped off the area. The aircraft and rotor blades are painted with a tactical scheme, which can make them very hard to see. Better communication between the construction company and us also could have minimized the risk.

Working alongside civilian construction teams is not a common issue, but that fact makes it even more hazardous. This incident illustrates the significance of proper communication, the danger of assumptions, and the importance of managing the risk others pose to your mission. In the end, it doesn't matter who broke the tip cap; our squadron still lost money and man-hours.

We can't foresee all the mistakes others may make, but we certainly could have done more to prevent this wayward contract worker from damaging our aircraft. 🚚💥

Petty Officer Nicasio works in the corrosion-control shop at HSC-3.