

Crane Gets the Drop on Maintainers

By AD1(AW) Jude Ezedike

It was a cold day aboard NAS Jacksonville, Fla. We mustered at 0645—the usual time, held the maintenance meeting, and did a FOD walkdown on the flight line and in the hangar. That's were normalcy stopped.

Red Lion 615 was in PMI. The NADEP crew needed to remove the No. 2 input module to repair panels beneath that area. Maintenance control tasked us to remove it, so I gathered my crew and headed to the PMI hangar. Because of the aircraft spot, the CAT III crane in the hangar could not reach it. We ended up having to use the utility crane—more commonly known as the seat crane.

I did a pre-operational inspection on the crane, and everything looked good. I signed the 52 card and got to work. We unbolted the input module, strapped it, and hooked it up to the crane. The component was lowered to an awaiting pallet on the hangar deck. We checked tools and removed the FOD from the work area.

We now were ready to stow the crane. I was the only person qualified to operate it, and none of us had used this support equipment since 2004. We followed all the necessary stowage procedures but missed one simple step: The cable remained in tension and hooked to the bar. As soon as we pulled the pin to the lower bar, the boom immediately came crashing down. The pin bracket on the bottom was bent and had created a large dent on the bar assembly. I never thought such a thing could happen. I was very thankful no one was hurt.

Clearly, the accident could have been prevented had we done some refresher training before using the equip-

ment. We should have asked questions about the proper stowage of the crane. After reading the publication, I found out the cable should be completely out of tension while lowering the bar. I further learned the pin should not be pulled whenever the cable is in tension.

We all learned valuable lessons that day. As the supervisor, I should have made everyone read the book and review the requirements for the equipment, since none of us had used it for a long time. ✦

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