



# Admiral's Corner

From Commander, Naval Safety Center



## Mishaps and Malpractice

Last year an experienced FA-18 pilot operated his section in complete violation of established procedures on a low-level route below the route structure. The mishap aircraft hit charted powerlines, FODed both engines, and was destroyed. Though the mishap wingman was in section, he didn't communicate his concerns about blatant SOP and OPNAVINST 3710 flight violations.

Also last year, a squadron commanding officer failed to prepare properly for a flight with the known risks of landing on a short runway. Instead, he flew a low-altitude air show for family and spectators before willfully landing with a known anti-skid failure. A subsequent main-brake failure, and not following NATOPS procedures, resulted in his ejection and Class-A damage to the aircraft.

Rarely does an accepted causal factor of any mishap fall outside categories cited in the OPNAVINST 3750. However, these two mishaps clearly fit into a category all its own: disregard for established rules and regulations. This behavior is clearly unacceptable.

A review of last year's mishaps indicates some form of human error remains as a primary cause in Class-A mishaps. We find almost 90 percent of all mishaps can be traced to some sort of human error, especially decision errors. Here are several recent examples:

- Pilot confuses launch-bar switch for the taxi light and lowers launch bar on landing rollout. Launch bar snags arresting gear, and aircraft flips over. Class-A damage to an FA-18.
- An H-53 pilot doesn't land immediately after indications of an engine failure/fire, in violation of NATOPS. Four fatalities.
- A T-45 student aviator fails to execute NATOPS procedure for perceived brake failure. Aircraft swerves, departs runway and is destroyed after flipping over.
- Pilot disengages nosewheel steering (NWS) while clearing a flight-control problem. NWS is not reengaged by

pilot on takeoff roll, and aircraft departs runway because of pilot's inability to control aircraft with only differential braking. Class-A damage to an FA-18.

- Pilot fails to perform NATOPS procedure on landing rollout after anti-skid failure. Aircraft is on bingo profile at an unfamiliar field. The pilot ejects. Class-A damage to an FA-18.

- An FA-18 pilot shuts down the wrong engine while executing NATOPS procedure for a hydraulic failure. Aircraft becomes uncontrollable, and the pilot ejects, resulting in Class-A mishap.

Though each mishap was not the result of willful violations of NATOPS or established SOPs, aircraft, and in some cases, lives were lost. NATOPS is not advisory—it will save aircrew lives and precious assets if followed. It is when we depart from established procedures, either willfully or through neglect that mishaps result. I encourage each ready room to review these mishaps and walk away with the right lessons learned.

When we talk about reducing mishaps, we must focus on what is preventable. Willful aircrew malpractice or violations of procedures are controllable by those of us in Naval Aviation. We know the pressures to complete the mission can create tough situations and challenge our aircrew, but as professionals, we must always strive to do the job correctly and safely. Intrusive leadership, effective training and on-target risk management should be the "mantra" of every CO.

Take advantage of all the resources available to you, whether it's the experience of your shipmates, additional training opportunities, simulators, survey-team visits, or culture workshops. Visit our website; you'll find a wealth of information and material to help make your unit safer.

### HOW ARE WE DOING?

Aviation (Rates = Mishaps Per 100,000 Flight Hours)

Class-A Flight Mishaps (FY05 thru 27 December)

Service	Current Rate	FY04 thru 27 Dec 04	FY05 Goal*	FY02-04 Avg	Fighter/Attack	Helo
USN:	3/1.34	1/0.44	10/0.88	19.7/1.75	2/3.96	1/2.31
USMC:	1/1.48	4/5.78	7/1.94	14.7/3.97	1/3.90	0/0.00

\* Goals based on FY02 baseline.

■ rate above goal.

■ rate below goal.