

and direct the job. Once the slide hammer was threaded to the forward end of the wing pin, the hammer operator began moving the sliding handle back and forth to remove the pin. After a few good hits on the forward stop, the pin began to move. With the pin a few inches out, I decided to reposition myself to support the pin as it came out.

Unfortunately, as I walked around the hammer operator toward the pin, my face moved through the path of the slide hammer at the precise moment the shear pin gave way. The hammer operator had no chance to arrest the momentum of the slide hammer as it separated from the extension shaft and hit my right cheekbone. I immediately saw a bright flash—one that I imagine would follow a left hook from Mike Tyson. I felt as if I was going to pass out and grabbed onto the deck crane for support. I heard other maintainers asking me if I was OK as I reached up to feel my mouth and survey the damage. To my surprise, there appeared to be no blood; however, I felt a gap in my teeth and looked down to see one of my teeth lying on the hangar deck. I would find out a few hours later at dental sick call that my right

incisor had sheared at the gum line and exposed the nerve. Luckily no bones were broken, and, following a tetanus shot and root canal, I was good to go. Considering the potential injuries I might have suffered had I been a split second earlier or later crossing the slide hammer's path, I was lucky.

Outer wing removal can be a tedious job, but it requires attention to detail and constant situational awareness. From the initial step of removing panels and hardware, to the final step of wing-pin removal, one moment of inattention can be costly. My team was experienced, we were wearing the proper PPE, and we had a sufficient number of personnel, including safety observers. Despite all of that, this accident still occurred.

What could I have done differently? I could have remained at my original position or crossed in front of the hammer operator with more of a buffer zone. That choice would have kept me out of the path of a knock out blow from a slide hammer. Before you act, always take the time to assess your surroundings. You may avoid injury or worse. ✂

Petty Officer Kedzie works with VFA-102.

Motorola and Boeing Do Not Mix

By AZAN Tyler Brackeen

One morning while on detachment at NAS Fallon, Nev., I went to FOD walkdown, which is a function practiced daily here at VFA-25. It was a beautiful sunny day, and, in my rush, I did not realize that my coverall pockets were loaded down with random, loose personal gear.

I was not fully aware of the potential hazards that were in my pockets as I briskly walked to the flight line. The full magnitude of my decision to carry unauthorized items onto the line escaped me because the task was simple: Go to the flight line in time for FOD walkdown. At least that's all I thought about the situation at the time.

This daily ritual is an all-hands evolution, conducted every morning before the flight schedule begins and at every shift change in my command. Every squadron in every CAG and every command that flies aircraft does a FOD walkdown at least once a day. When hard objects are found, they are recorded and placed in a bag. These items are listed in a log with a location where the loose

gear was found. This FOD list is then routed up the chain of command in hopes of finding where it came from and to keep it from happening again.

That day, I was carrying a cellphone, BIC lighter, and three coins. None of them seemed terribly bad or dangerous at the time, but I now realize these items represented potential hazards that could destroy engines, aircraft, aviators, or shipmates. Not one item I was carrying was more or less important than the other, but none of them belonged on the flight line.

All commands use tool control and FOD programs to control the items that can cause mishaps, injuries or deaths. An active inventory on all items used on the flight deck or flight line is essential, including tools and consumables. Any unaccounted object that can damage an engine or aircraft that is found on the flight deck, hangar or flight line is commonly referred to as foreign object damage (or debris) and can consist of many everyday items that Sailors or Marines carry in their pockets.



Photo by PH1 Christopher Bishop, inset photo by AT1(AW) Rumbo

All hands are responsible for the FOD program, and increased awareness is crucial to the integrity of the aircraft. A simple item such as a coin can and has caused the loss of aircraft and aviators. The mindset that loose personal gear isn't a big deal is unsatisfactory, and I learned the hard way.

Everyone must make a conscious decision to leave personal items in the work center before proceeding to FOD walkdown. Pockets should be empty anytime people go out on the line. If not, it could lead to a devastating accident. Preventing FOD and mishaps is part of the operational risk-management process, and program requirements and steps for an effective program are found in COMNAVAIRFORINST 4790.2, Volume 5, Chapter 12, as well as wing and local command instructions, when available.

I was wrong for carrying unauthorized items onto the ramp, and each caused a specific threat.

The first item, a cellular phone, operates within the RF frequency range when in use. Some live ordnance also work within the RF frequency range; hence, ordnance has the potential to detonate from the use of a cellphone, causing the loss of millions of dollars of property and, more importantly, the lives of many Sailors.

Coins and lighters also pose threats. Coins are quite possibly the most overlooked items. Any small coin can completely destroy a 404-GE400-turbofan engine at an estimated cost of \$3.5 million. They can get sucked into the intake of the jet, causing the engine to need a complete overhaul. Those types of mishaps have happened in the past and, unfortunately, continue to occur every year. These loose items also can get blown around the flight line and into faces or eyes.

The BIC lighter had the potential of a heat source. While I was searching for FOD underneath the aircraft, a careless spark could have ignited a venting fuel tank and caused a wide-scale explosion, resulting in the deaths of many people and the destruction of many aircraft.

These potential hazards can be prevented with a simple 20-to-30-second check to "de-FOD" yourself before a daily walkdown. I had put my shipmates and myself in danger and didn't even think about it. I was caught and faced the wrath that came with my poor decision. Foreign object damage is definitely not a subject to be taken lightly. I paid the price of being embarrassed, but other Sailors and Marines can learn from my lesson. ✎

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