



worn my cranial, because the mild concussion I received could have been worse.

I witnessed a second incident during JFK's COMPTUEX. Again, an air-hose coupling detached from a Prowler, erratically striking the metal around the hose-attachment panel, the starboard boarding ladder, and the engine-bay door. It destroyed the metal skin of an aircraft, requiring several costly depot-level repairs. We were fortunate the only damage was to an aircraft.

Wrestling Wild

By AE1(AW) Dale Wray

Once encountered a hazard on the flight deck that taught me never to stand around the end of a huffer hose. I learned this acute lesson one late night on board USS *Kitty Hawk* (CV 63) several years ago, and, more recently, I twice witnessed it on board USS *John F. Kennedy* (CV 67).

In the first case we were starting our EA-6B when the unimaginable happened. We had followed procedures to apply external power and ground air. We had used common sense and firmly had secured the hose-end attachments to the tractor and aircraft. In this case, I made sure we did every step by the book and even firmly pulled both ends of the hose. After the starboard engine kicked online, I was given the signal to pull power. When I removed the cord, I failed to notice the coupling—that attaches the huffer hose to the aircraft—had disintegrated. In a split second, the hose ruptured with a loud bang, and a wild hose relentlessly beat me.

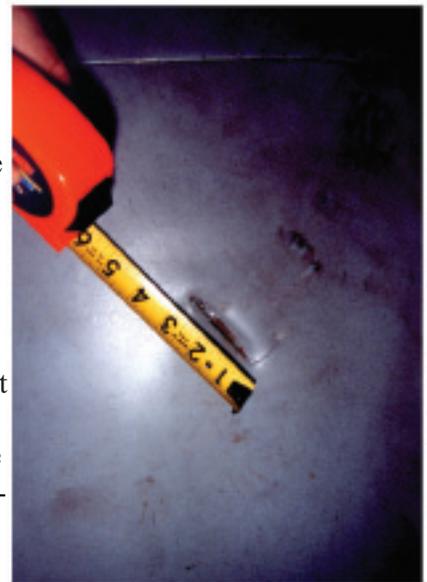
The tow-tractor driver immediately secured the air, but the hose already had done its damage, whacking me up and down the length of my body. The hose had hit me three times in the leg, chest and head, and had thrown me backward 10 feet. My 200-pound frame was no match for the flailing wrath and power of a six-inch hose at 55 psi. I was glad I had

My last encounter—I hope—ended in an injury to our flight-deck chief, who was battered by a hose from a tractor. Our regular deckwell wasn't working, and that outage forced us to use a mobile-air unit. We were in the pre-launch sequence for a critical flight into Afghanistan, and time was ticking away. The hose looked brand new. The couplings looked good. Our pull checks went OK. We were in a rush, but everything was going as planned, until the tractor driver fired up the huffer. The hose inflated, and, six to 10 seconds later, the engine-compressor blades were turning. The next thing I heard was a loud pop. I looked over and saw our chief wracked with pain. She was bouncing up and down in pain, holding her bruised arm and trying to point at the guilty coupling.

Inspect both couplings before you attach a huffer hose to an aircraft. Make sure each end firmly is secured by giving it an extra tug. Take my advice: Remember to stand clear, and be wary of a wild hose.

Petty Officer Wray is the QA LPO at VAQ-140.

I also experienced the dangers of a flailing huffer hose while on board USS John F. Kennedy. CVW-8 had eight huffer-hose failures during work-ups and cruise. We had only one minor injury, but three aircraft were damaged. It is important to inspect the flat bands and



V-bands on the hose ends. The V-bands often are damaged when the hose is dragged across the deck. Retired ASCM Noli Dimaano had bought a Band It pneumatic banding machine in S-4 on Kennedy. It reduced band failures to zero. For more information, contact ASC Joe Funderburk at 757-444-3520, Ext. 7291 (DSN 564), or e-mail: joseph.funderburk@navy.mil. —Ed.

Hoses



A hose can appear to be connected properly (upper left), but you need to tug on it, check the V-bands and flat bands, and check the hose for holes or tears. The attachment point (lower left) is different for each aircraft, but it's a safe bet to stand well away from that area when air is applied. A flailing hose can damage an aircraft (center left) or even kill a maintainer. Check the huffer hose connections on the end of the tractor, as well as the aircraft coupler—like the author above.

Almost Normal

AEC David Robinson

During a hot-pit crew swap just eight days into flight operations, a routine refueling got out of hand...literally.

The helicopter's refueling started out OK: The fuelers were called and on station, and the grounding wire was hooked up. QA then noticed it was the wrong wire, so the hose was not connected until the correct wire was brought to the flight deck and was installed. With the helo still turning, the fueling team could not hear each other. The team was told not to transfer any fuel until a good fuel sample had been taken. As the

fuel hose was pressurized, a fuel sample was given to the aircrew for inspection, and the PC and LSE gave the signal to cut fuel.

The fuel team looked puzzled because no one had turned on the nozzle. The aircraft had been receiving fuel ever since the hose was pressurized, even with the nozzle in the closed position.

The team could not secure pressure to the station and could not get a limp hose. Without being directed, they disconnected the hose from the helo, and you can guess what happened next. The check valve on the hose nozzle failed, and we now had fuel spraying out of a two-and-a-half-inch hose at 55 psi.

Just when things looked like it couldn't get worse, the fueller lost control of the hose, allowing it to whip wildly and to spray everything and everyone on the flight deck.

The helo crew wrestled the hose under control by putting a Z-kink in the line, which slowed the pressure and allowed Sailors to grab the nozzle. The fuel team secured pressure to the hose, and the helo was shut down. The fuel had come within inches of the No. 1 engine exhaust and, most likely, would have caused an aircraft fire on the flight deck. The runaway fuel hose would have fed the fire, possibly damaging the aircraft and ship.

We learned that even the most routine jobs and tasks should not be taken lightly. The team was trained, which helped tremendously, but we also had luck on our side—this time. 

Chief Robinson wrote this article while assigned to HS-11.