

# Making Intake Covers Safer and Better

By AN Timothy Hill

**M**y squadron just learned about a mishap that occurred when an intake cover was ingested into the intake of an E-2C. Although poor judgment and carelessness caused this mishap, the Bluetail family began to think of ways to prevent such a mishap from occurring to our Hawkeys.

During the day, the intake covers are hard to miss. The bright red covers stand out. At night, however, yellow lights flood the flight deck, and colors tend to run together, making it difficult to see the difference between a plugged or open intake.

To remedy this situation, we applied red reflective tape over the entire front of the cover, being careful not to cover the handle or IMRL tag. We then added four white strips of reflective tape in several places: one-half-inch wide in its center and around the handle, forming a square. This pattern varies the color and increases the cover's visibility; it now is easy to tell when it is installed in an intake.

The reflective tape is cheap and doesn't compare with the cost of a Class C or worse mishap. It took us only one hour on a no-fly day, compared to a two- or three-day job to repair or replace an engine.

During the day, the visibility also is good because the sun glistens off the reflective tape. At night, the yellow lights around the island provide enough light to reflect off the cover, making it easy to tell whether it's installed.

The taped cover does not relieve a maintainer or aircrew of their responsibility to do a good preflight or walkaround, but it makes that job easier. Although this

modified product doesn't reduce the need for training, it does make the process safer and will help to reduce the chance of a mishap. After all, we are charged with finding ways to lower our mishap rates. This idea might help.

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*Great idea! I do have questions about the FOD hazard from chipped or peeled tape, and I also know a modification to aircraft or support equipment must be forwarded through the chain of command (one mod is allowed without prior approval). I'm sure you've taken that step, but, if not, please submit your idea because it seems to apply to all aircraft. Your TYCOM or NAVAIR might like the suggestion, could approve the design for the entire fleet, or might offer changes to reduce the FOD aspects.—Ed.*