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light illuminated. I kept the remaining surging engine at mid-range power setting and flew at 300 knots in the descent to North Island.

With good hydraulics from the right engine, I elected to stay fast and then to glide into position, lowering the gear at the last moment.



This action hastened my approach and kept the aircraft in a good ejection envelope. I landed at North Island with an uneventful trap on runway 36. Fortunately, the right engine surging with high-temperature indications did not get any worse.

Strangely enough, the fire crew did not detect excessive heat from either engine. After a thorough investigation, with both engines removed

and treated for exceeding EGT limitations, we decided neither engine had had an overtemp. Extensive troubleshooting showed the upper thermocouple malfunctioned on the left engine, and the right engine was A799'd—could not duplicate on deck. Unfortunately, the ICEMS memory unit experienced a wrap-around condition, so it was useless in the troubleshooting effort. The mechs installed two new engines before the next flight, and, for safety reasons, we ordered the two removed engines not to be installed together on the same aircraft again.

No one got hurt, and an aircraft wasn't damaged, but one bad component was the difference between a perfectly good aircraft and one ready to be jettisoned. Knowing your aircraft systems, following procedures, and using good air-sense are tried-and-true actions to survive an emergency. 

Cdr. Culbertson has flown as a T-2C SERGRAD flight-instructor pilot, as an operational FA-18 pilot, as an FA-18 and A-7E developmental test pilot, and as the chief flight instructor at the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School. He is now the director of quality and the chief pilot at Naval Air Depot, North Island, flying FA-18s coming out of overhaul, repair and modification.