

Best Practices

Information for Continual Improvement

What are we doing right? Much of what you read about safety usually focuses on mishaps, near-mishaps, and what our Sailors and Marines are doing wrong. As professionals, we need to continually improve the way we do business. As the articles in *Approach* are meant to share experiences so others learn (the “There I was” concept you’re familiar with), we also need to share practices that can prevent mishaps. Here are several “best practices” we want to share.

From safety surveys at MCAS Beaufort:

A VMFA squadron has instituted a daily ops brief before flight operations each morning. One of the featured items is a short systems lecture presented by a squadron subject-matter expert. This initiative is part of MAG-31’s effort to get back to basics and make sure aircrew have the in-depth systems knowledge needed to conduct routine aircraft operations. All pilots also are required to complete a monthly emergency-procedure simulator event, regardless of their experience level or amount of flight time completed during the month. Repeated training in aircraft systems and emergency procedures increases the likelihood of correct responses in critical situations and makes sure pilots have a firm grasp of the basics as a foundation for more advanced tactical training.

From safety surveys at NAS Lemoore:

VFA-14 employs a safety-petty-officer-of-the-day program (SPOD). This is a rotating duty between the shops. When it is your shop’s day, a petty officer is selected to watch selected maintenance evolutions (basically the same duties as the safety petty officer in the squadron). However, this program gives confidence to every member of the squadron and underlines the “everyone is a safety officer” mantra. A grade sheet is filled out and sent up the chain.

From VPU-2’s December safety gram:

The CO asked the ASO to analyze P-3 historical A, B, and C mishap summaries from 1990 to 2003 to identify the most likely cause of the next mishap, and then to identify steps the squadron can take to mitigate the risks. The result: a determination that the most likely scenario would be a ground mishap caused by human factors, specifically poor procedural execution and supervisory error. Having picked a scenario, the squadron then used AMI preparations to refocus on following proper procedures the first time and making sure maintenance actions are conducted and documented “by the book.” The result was improved aircraft availability and mission effectiveness. They also were able to schedule a dedicated training day for maintainers, as well as aircrew. Leadership makes sure the steps remain in place and are effective; the efforts are paying dividends.

From VAW-126’s November best-practices message:

This squadron has adapted the human-factors council (HFC), long used by aviators, to include all the squadron’s enlisted personnel, becoming the EHFC. The EHFC gives the squadron an opportunity to identify and mitigate potential problems among the troops. The program includes an initial risk assessment of personnel upon check-in, including a review of records and interviews. The EHFC convenes before underway or detachment periods and as determined by the CO. Individuals identified as high risk by the EHFC will be the subject of a follow-on human-factors board. “The goal is to provide the CO with the tools needed to make an educated and evaluated decision whether or not the individual may work on the flight line, flight-deck-hazardous area, or may demonstrate qualities posing social risk to the individual.” The squadron has had the program in place for seven months and now feels “this intervention is critical to meeting FRP requirements, and to continually assess the well being of the command from a personnel standpoint.”