

Whidbey Island Gets High-Tech Paint System

By Tony Popp

Powder coating is on the cutting edge of corrosion control for the aviation community, and AIMD's support-equipment (SE) division just received the latest in technology. A new powder-coat facility has been finished, and the SE division is taking the lead.

This facility is the only one for support equipment in the Navy. North Island has a powder-coat facility but does not have the paint-removal capability offered by our burn-off oven and blast booth.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony officially opened the state-of-the-art facility and marked the end of almost two years of work devoted to completing the facility at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI).

This unit houses a paint blast-off booth, a powder-coat spray booth, and separate paint bake-off and bake-on ovens. Funding came from ComNavAirPac's pollution prevention (P2) program.

The Seabees in Construction Battalion Unit 417 began building the facility in early 2000. They were tasked with erecting the 43-foot-by-88-foot-by-25-foot pre-engineered building from the ground up. Their effort saved the base \$490,000 in labor costs and considerably speeded up the construction process.

Over the next 18 months, the building's interior was completed, an industrial blast booth and paint burn-off oven for paint removal was set up, and a powder-coat spray booth and bake-on oven were installed. This last item is large enough to hold an entire A/S32A-44 tow tractor.

With completion of the powder-coat facility, AIMD Sailors can add the powder-coating process to their corrosion-control methods.

This process greatly will help to protect the environment by reducing the paint and hazmat required for corrosion prevention.

The facility's design has dramatically improved AIMD's corrosion-control capabilities and vastly reduced manpower used in SE's corrosion-prevention program. The new steel-grit blast booth will improve capabilities for corrosion removal and will increase productivity. The powder-coat process will cut the need for periodic corrosion treatment on individual items of SE.

This facility also will have a direct impact on the SE found on the two Puget Sound carriers: USS *Abraham Lincoln* and USS *Carl Vinson*. SE mechanics from the carriers can use the powder-coat facilities at NASWI for their post-deployment corrosion and painting requirements. 

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The powder-coat booth allows large pieces of SE to be coated.



This special gun meters out the right amount of material, reducing hazmat requirements.