



Having an Effect on Maintenance Safety

I recently had the honor of serving as co-chair (along with my USMC counterpart, Col. Buck Dewey, HQMC—Safety Division) at the first Navy and Marine Corps Safety Council, which met in Washington, D.C. on 17 March. This meeting was significant for a number of reasons. First, an unprecedented number of flag and general officers attended. Second, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Safety, Ms. Connie DeWitte, helped kick off the meeting. And finally, our Secretary of the Navy, Gordon England addressed the group and helped direct the discussion of how to reduce mishaps in our Navy and Marine Corps.

SECNAV's attendance clearly shows how important safety and the well-being of our Sailors, Marines and civilians is to our leadership. To quote SECNAV, "Safety is very, very high on my personal agenda." Not only is attention to safety "a great visible sign of your commitment to our men and women, but safety programs produce a very large, direct benefit to the total force."

This is a critical point, because, from our most junior Sailor and Marine to our most senior officers and civilian personnel, a top priority is to keep Sailors, Marines, and civilians from preventable injuries or death and to prevent damage to our equipment. Success in our efforts will improve combat readiness, preserve precious resources, and keep families from unwanted sorrow.

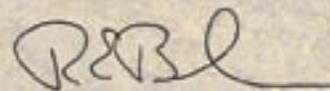
The Safety Council's work is being carried out in four committees, which are made up of representatives from the aviation, afloat, ashore, and ground tactical communities. During the meeting, discussions focused on short-term and long-term initiatives and resource

issues. Operational Risk Management, safety culture, and traffic mishaps were significant topics. The members of the four committee working groups have done some excellent work to date, but there remains much to be done and the clock is ticking.

How are we doing in terms of the mishap-reduction goals, now that we're halfway through the first year of the two-year campaign? Navy military operational fatalities are lower than the five-year average, and better than the FY04 goal. The Marine Corps is off to a similarly great start in total Class A operational fatalities, ground operational fatalities, and traffic deaths. In five of the target areas (four Navy and one Marine), we are doing better than the five-year average but worse than the FY04 goal. And in six areas (three Navy and three Marine), we are doing worse than the five-year average. I believe the work being done by the Safety Council and the involvement of all hands will generate momentum to turn these problem areas around and to start making real progress. Remember - these are not just statistics — each represents a real person who has been injured or killed or equipment that has been damaged or lost.

This issue of Mech has several excellent articles and statistics to help maintainers move forward with your efforts. Between 1980 and 2003, aviators were cited in mishaps that cost the Navy about \$8.1 billion. Maintainers were involved in about \$2.0 billion worth of mishaps, so you can clearly see -- your reduction efforts are critical!

Finally, as Secretary England pointed during the Safety Council meeting, "The goal isn't really fifty percent. We'll settle for fifty percent, but we don't want anyone injured or killed." People are our most precious asset, and I want you to know that all of us at the Naval Safety Center and Marine Corps Safety Division are doing our very best to eliminate all mishaps! But we can't do it alone. We need your help to make the Navy and Marine Corps safer and more able to meet the challenges that lie ahead.


RADM Dick Brooks