

"No Step"

By ATAN Torran A. Lohman

I had heard of people falling off jets and often read of the long-lasting effects from such incidents. That said, I never thought I would be a victim. I always am careful of what I do, where I walk, and how my actions can hurt a fellow worker or me. My short career, however, was about to gain a new experience; I would add my name to the fall list.

I was changing a 26-foot hard line the first half of the day, a rather tedious job. I was frustrated with the task and was not as careful as I should have been. Our AMEs were working on the seats, so the boarding ladder was occupied on both sides. I walked to the back of the jet, grabbed a little work stand that happened to be there, and started to climb onto the stab.

When I got to the second step, the stand slid out from beneath me. I grabbed for the edge of the stab as I stepped back down to regain my balance, and, as soon as my weight shifted, the stab popped up. I wasn't prepared for a moving stab, so I lost my balance and hit the ground. I did one thing right: My cranial was on and strapped. I got up and looked around, hoping nobody had seen me. People did, though, and they ran over to check me. After a closer look at my chin, our QA Senior Chief sent me to medical. An hour or so later, I returned to work on light duty with busted lip, stitches in my chin, and a headache you wouldn't believe.

Looking back on my experience, I realize a couple key things that I should have noticed. The stabs, which everyone climbs on, are spray painted "NO STEP,"

and this area is stenciled for a reason. The stabs on my jet didn't have any hydraulic pressure applied, which would have held them steady. The little work ladder that I had used was sitting in a pool of hydraulic fluid—so much for my situational awareness and for

...MEANS DON'T STEP

identifying hazards to start the ORM process.

I thought I was careful enough not to fall off a jet, but I was wrong. I learned you shouldn't rush any job that you don't feel comfortable about. Be aware of your surroundings, and trust that "NO STEP" means what it says.



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Airman Lohman has learned one consequence of stepping on flight-control surfaces, but the actual reason for these stenciled areas is keep maintainers from walking or placing objects on or lifting these surfaces, which will damage an aircraft. A majority of these no-step surfaces are made of thin aluminum skin, usually .032 to .040 mm, bonded to an aluminum honeycomb core with a structural adhesive under high temperatures. This process allows for a great strength-to-weight ratio, but tool containers or flight-deck boots easily can damage these surfaces. A small ding or hole can cause the skin to delaminate or corrosive deposits to form, weakening the surface. "NO STEP" means to stay off to avoid damage and to avoid injury. Use the correct work stands and ladders to climb on aircraft.

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50% Mishap Reduction Opportunity

Falls FY99-03

The Naval Safety Center database shows 23 maintainers were injured in falls from aircraft or work stands in the last five years. These injuries have included broken or fractured arms, legs, ankles, skulls, hips, eye sockets, and other body parts. Falls cost us our most important asset: people. This hazard must be reduced to help us meet lost-workday goals.

Type-aircraft breakdown:

H-46	10
F-14	3
H-60	2
EA-6	2
C-9	2
P-3	2
S-3	1