

engagement. Correcting unsafe behavior on the spot is a critical step. Some people don't like peer or superior critiques, but this command-directed approach is necessary to combat personal error, to protect our aircraft, and to save lives.

• We think "intrusive leadership" is one way to stay connected with junior Sailors. This approach shows that leaders care about their welfare, particularly on weekends and holidays. We also have instituted a mentor program, in which junior personnel (E-1 through E-3 and some E-4s) are paired with petty officers who speak with them each weekend day. They talk about the junior Sailor's plans for the weekend: social, travel, and professional. They also discuss possible problems with stress. The mentor program isn't intended to and doesn't invade our people's privacy or personal liberty time because the junior Sailors voluntarily cooperate. Simply stated, "Intrusive leadership means getting involved in the crew's lives—on and off the job."

• Improving the total safety culture is our overall goal. We have to face up to the never-ending battle against complacency and human error. We must take care of issues inside our "lifelines" through concerned leadership and a willingness to listen to our Sailors.

We had an active safety program before this incident, but our maintainer's injury has shown us that we need to fine tune a few items. 

Petty Officer Ezell is the safety petty officer at VQ-2.

*Petty Officer Ezell echoes the sentiment that my maintenance department has expressed for more than a year. ORM, GCT and HFIM set the standards that maintainers should follow, and those programs are stressed every time we interact with the fleet. I commend VQ-2's approach in solving these problems and hope only that other activities do the same, before they have their own Bic story.—Cdr. Al Stephens, Naval Safety Center maintenance officer.*



For more info...

The quote on "intrusive leadership" came from the summer 2001 issue of *Ashore* (available at [www.safetycenter.navy.mil/media/ashore/default.htm](http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/media/ashore/default.htm)). In that issue, a ship's CO and safety officer shared their thoughts and recommendations to reduce personal injuries and deaths, specifically from PMV mishaps.

# Attack of the Killer Huffer

*By AEC Donald English*

It was a clear and brisk January morning in Atsugi, Japan. I was the QAR for the morning launch and was looking for hazards and violators. On this particular morning, the launch was going without a hitch: The checks went well, and everyone was being safe. The aircraft finished final checks, taxied from the ramp toward the taxiway and proceeded to ruin my day.

Out of habit, I grabbed the halon bottle to move it out of the jet blast as the plane turned. I passed behind a GTC-85 huffer unit that was parked next to another aircraft on our flight line. I parked the halon bottle and moved toward the hangar. The jet blast from the taxiing jet suddenly blew the top cover off the huffer unit and into my back! It was a good thump, but I was fortunate because the flat side of the cover hit me. I didn't suffer a major injury, although it rattled my nerves.

I would not have been so lucky had the edge of that panel hit me. The huffer's cover is a steel panel, approximately 3-feet high by 4-feet wide, and is secured with one-quarter-turn dzus fasteners. I don't know why the cover wasn't secured, but it isn't something squadron personnel have any reason to open. The pre-op cards do say to check cover integrity, so I guess we own some fault.

I did learn a few lessons: Everything may appear safe, but don't let down your guard. Always be alert, and expect the unexpected—no matter how long you've been in the business. Never turn your back on an aircraft while the engines are running. Make sure the SE pre-op inspections are done before putting any SE on the flight line.

Any of these steps likely would have prevented the huffer from getting the better of me that morning. 

Chief English is the maintenance-control chief at VAQ-136.