

# Oops!

# Did

# I

# Do

# That?

By AM2(AW) James Anderson

The flight schedule had ended, and it was time to service and daily the jets. As usual, I grabbed the nitrogen cart and started my rounds up and down the line. I don't have a tractor license, so I do this nightly event "boat style": Pick up the tongue and push it. ORM and the NAMP tell us this is the best way to do the job when you're not licensed.

I finished all of the servicing and turned in my tools, so the rest of my fellow "framers" could go home for the evening. But, before leaving, I had to drop off the nitrogen cart at the LOX farm for servicing. Here is where I put on my delta-sierra hat. I know the rules and what an ORM review would say, but I ignored everything I had learned. A little forethought would have prevented the events that unfolded.

My first mistake was getting on the tow tractor and hooking up the nitrogen cart. I was

going to take it to the LOX farm, which was too far away to do it "boat style." Yes, I still didn't have that tow-tractor license. ORM and the NAMP were developed to prevent this mixture for disaster, but I did it anyway.

I started to chug along on the flight line and drove toward the farm. This ride normally is uneventful and boring, and it was this time, too. I dropped off the nitrogen cart and headed back toward the hangar for another uneventful ride. Once I was back at the hangar, my supervisor already was opening the door, so I could drive in. Here is where everything went wrong.

He opened the hangar door, and I gave him a thumbs up to signal that the door was clear. Again, ORM should have kicked in, and it did a little bit. I surveyed the surroundings, checked that I was far enough from the doors and walls, and started to ease in the tractor.

As I moved farther inside, I could see a tow tractor parked next to a jet. I quickly turned the wheel right to avoid the other tug, when sud-

denly I heard a loud “Smack!” Confused, I sat in awed silence. I wondered what the heck had caused that noise. I slowly looked around..

I only could hang my head and shake it in disbelief. The tractor had struck the area where the doors meet the hangar wall. My supervisor looked at me, shook his head, and asked, “You do have a license...right?”

“No!” I responded.

We assessed the damage and found the cinder-block pillar was damaged slightly, the siding was bent, and the tow tractor’s right front tire was cut. We went to maintenance control and told the senior chief what had happened. He asked, “You do have a license...right?”



The cut tire wasn't too bad.



But the damage to the hangar was far worse.

“No!” I answered. We all went back out to look at my handiwork. The senior chief said, “Write your statement, and stand by for a phone call in the morning.”

That phone call came, and I repeated the story to everyone. I learned that even the simplest tasks require ORM. I didn't stop and think before acting, but we all must do that step, or mishaps will continue. I wanted to do a good job and always had been cautious, but a license is required to operate support equipment. I learned that you might get away with an unauthorized procedure today, but, tomorrow, it might bite you.



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*This petty officer's honest review of a lapse in personal and professional integrity also points out a leadership issue. He is not the only person at fault. If the supervisor had to ask the worker about a license, that leader missed the boat. Heck, the monthly maintenance plan has a section on SE licensing, so everyone in the command can identify licensed operators.*

*This case isn't the first one about a non-licensed operator being involved in a mishap. Our SIMS-WESS database is filled with similar incidents. When are we going to learn? When are leaders going to take responsibility and stop letting unlicensed operators run free because “It gets the job done”? Getting the job done means being a leader, getting your people qualified, and insisting they follow the rules.*

*Every squadron has an SE-licensing program. Supervisors must know who is authorized to operate equipment, and they often do. However, some people wink and let an unauthorized action take place. Our goal is to reduce mishaps 50 percent in less than two years. If we continue to let perceived pressure or the unbridled desire to get a job done make us violate the rules, we let down the shop, squadron, wing, TYCOM, and Navy or Maine Corps.—Ed.*