

Workbench Requirements That Might Get Overlooked

By AVCM(AW/SW) Willie Burnett

Maintainers know that housekeeping is a part of our daily lives. We know that a clean shop makes our workspace livable, but, more importantly, it helps to prevent FOD and micro-FOD from damaging equipment and endangering personnel.

If that methodology is true, why do we take our workbenches for granted? I often find workers who have lost a “peanut light” cover from the back panel of an electrical workbench, and they never bothered to replace it. On almost every survey, we find workbenches with insulating material that has fallen off or is missing. We have not been perfect.

In the past five years, maintainers have suffered more than 250 reported electrical shocks. Had those workers paid attention to proper procedures and situational awareness, how many of these incidents could have been prevented?

SPAWARINST 5100.9D provides guidance on workbenches authorized for use in electrical workcenters. The most common item I see is the metal workbench, which is covered with the brown Benelex hardboard insulation. This item actually was designed for shipboard use, but it has made its way into most avionics workcenters. The workbench

designed for an ashore activity is a wooden bench that precludes the shock hazards associated with a metal one.

The metal workbench must have three-eighths-inch insulating material, meeting the requirements of high-density hardboard—as specified in the SPAWAR instruction. This material covers the top working surface, drawer fronts, and door surfaces. This insulating material must be installed using countersunk, plastic machine screws (NSN 5305-01-004-4983). The rest of the exposed metal surfaces and any metal wall surface within three feet of the workbench also must be insulated. These surfaces can be protected with one-eighth-inch electrical-insulation laminate (NSN 5970-00-912-1908). Specific guidance for attaching the laminate is contained in the instruction.

This equipment is easy to obtain and to use. We can't let the lack of workbench maintenance become the reason for a Sailor or

Marine being killed or injured. 

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Last issue, we reported 20 shocks in a mishap opportunity block. That count included OPNAV 3750 reports only. The 250 in this story include all aviation ratings regardless of cause (buffers, coffee pots or other equipment) or severity.—Ed.

