

Survey Spotlight

Fire in the Hangar!

By ADCS(AW) Carlos Rivera

“This is a drill, this is a drill! Fire, fire, fire! Fire in hangar bay 3, aircraft 102!” How many times do we hear this call for a ship’s drill? We get trained and evaluated by teams to see how well we would respond should we face the real thing.

The hangar-bay aircraft handlers make sure everyone participates in these drills—well, those who don’t avoid the hangar or escape through a hatch. Blueshirts make sure nothing blocks the fire hose. Damage controlmen inspect the firefighting gear. Maintainers get ready to fight a fire.

This training may seem like a waste of time after an uneventful cruise that didn’t require our learned skills. But it doesn’t have to be. Yes, we are back on the beach, and there’s time to kick back, to enjoy liberty, and to forget about the cruise.

Wait! Don’t forget all that training! Are you ready to respond to a hangar fire at your command? Just because you left the ship doesn’t mean there’s no risk of a hangar or flight-line fire.

Right after we return from cruise, tri-walls and cruise boxes full of gear are stacked three high, littering the hangar for days. Everything is in the way. Fire stations now are blocked, hangar doors might not work, and fire extinguishers probably are past due for weighing and certification.

When was the last time the fire department came by to inspect your fire-extinguishing gear? When was the last time the safety petty officer walked around and checked the location of all fire extinguishers? Do you have a program to make sure new check-ins receive training on this equipment and how to respond to an emergency?

I get the opportunity to travel and to survey many fleet commands. I often ask shipmates, “Do you know how to activate the fire-extinguishing system and how to report a fire?” More often than not, they answer,

“No!” Some Sailors don’t even know what hangar they are in. How can they report the location of the fire to the fire department? A few of these hangars are huge, so it is important to know which hangar segment the fire is in or, at least, if it is at the north, south, east, or west end.

A fire can erupt anywhere at anytime, so don’t let down your guard. If you have a heat-sensing fire-extinguishing system, know how it works and who is responsible for it. Prevent the potential for a serious fire by being educated and prepared. 

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