

Working Hard Not Smart

By AD1 Amado Valencia

It seems that no matter how hard we try to learn from our past mistakes, human nature inevitably brings us back to square one. It was like that one day when my shop was doing routine maintenance. We had to do 15 hours of work in 12 hours. Item number 17—of an unending list of jobs—was to install a new engine on an FA-18C. I should have noticed the warning signs of too much work in too little time but didn't, and the day became abnormal.

We were confident in our ability to do the engine change because it was a job we

had done several times before—another warning sign missed. We had to go to AIMD power plants, pick up an F404-GE-402 engine, and tow it back to our squadron. My shop didn't have any problems on the acceptance inspection, and we transported the engine to our hangar. Once back at the squadron, we again inspected the engine and noticed a big problem.

Before installing the engine, we found it had not been installed properly on the ETU-110 engine stand. The aft engine-mount adjustment had not been seated on the engine stand; it was only half-way in. Did we miss that at AIMD? Did we transport the engine recklessly, taking it through turn No. 3 at Daytona? We didn't have any answers. At this point, it didn't matter; we had a job to do, so we decided to correct the problem. A long-time Mech reader knows the story doesn't end here.

I gathered four mechs to lift the front part of the engine, to slide it back, and to seat it. The attachment needed to move only two inches and should take just a few seconds. I reasoned that procedure was far better than the half-hour or more it would take to get the required hardware for the job. My decision did not go as planned. The uncooperative engine slipped forward on the stand and landed on the afterburner case, denting it. I was thankful no one was injured but was heartbroken because of my mistake. I couldn't go into maintenance



Take a close look at this photo... what's wrong with this situation?



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control and put a positive spin on this story!

After bringing production to a screeching halt, we now needed a forklift to raise the engine and to place it on the stand. Meanwhile, we also discovered the mounting trunnions had

been removed, and the pins that connect the engine to the stand never had been installed.

AIMD measured the damaged area and found it within acceptable limits. I had depended on luck, but the only luck we had was in the degree of damage.

We did not use ORM: Identify the hazards, assess those hazards, make risk decisions, implement controls to reduce risk, and supervise. I learned that it never is OK to make up your own rules; you always should use the pubs. MIMs work because they contain the steps, warnings and cautions discovered by Sailors who already have tried shortcuts that didn't work.

Thanks to our mistakes, a one-hour engine install turned into an eight-hour ordeal. So much for the shortcut!

Petty Officer Valencia is the powerplants supervisor at VFA-83.



It shouldn't take long to see that the engine isn't seated in the trunnion-mount clamp.

You Might Be a Maintainer If...

By PR2 Richard Cooley

1. You have slept on the concrete under a wing
2. You have said, "Oh...yes sir, it's supposed to look like that."
3. You have sucked LOX to cure a hangover.
4. You know what JP4 or JP8 tastes like.
5. You have used a piece of safety wire as a toothpick.
6. You have said, "My boots are black!" Or you have spray-painted them black.
7. You refer to a pilot as a "stick actuator."
8. You have been told to get "some prop wash and a yard of flightline."
9. You have worked a 14-hour shift on an aircraft that isn't scheduled to fly the next day.
10. You have said, "As long as she starts every other try, you'll be fine sir."
11. You believe the aircraft has a soul.
12. You talk to the aircraft.
13. You defueled an aircraft an hour after refueling it.
14. The only thing you know about a city is where to get a quick bite to eat.
15. You know more about your co-workers than you do about your family.
16. You have looked for pictures of "your" aircraft in aviation books.
17. You have wished one pilot would just say, "Great aircraft!"
18. You take it as a badge of honor just to be called a "Det Hound."
19. You relieve yourself outdoors more often than indoors.
20. You can't comprehend why everyone doesn't want to be a maintainer.
21. You have worn someone else's hat to chow.
22. You have wiped down leaks just before a crew showed up.
23. You have stood on wheel chocks to keep your feet dry.
24. You have used dykes to trim a fingernail.
25. All you care about is the flight schedule and your days off.

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