

New Tool Helps As



Navy photo by JO3 Corwin Colbert

The Class A mishap rate 16 years ago stood at 4.5 mishaps per 100 ships annually. Eight years ago, the rate dropped to 3.5 Class A mishaps per 100 ships, and it has been steady ever since. Class A mishaps are those resulting in death, permanent total disability, or involving damage in excess of \$1 million.

While the mishap rate has declined, the number of Class A mishaps due to human factors, or human error, has remained at a relatively consistent rate of 90 percent. The afloat safety climate assessment survey (ASCAS) is a tool we believe will help reduce human error and, ultimately, the mishap rate.

This tool was developed by Capt. John Schmidt, LCDr. Alan Tupman, and HMCS Richard Flannery in 2003 at the Naval Safety Center. It is based on existing surveys used by aviation maintainers and aviators: the maintenance climate assessment survey (MCAS) and command assessment survey (CAS), which started back in 1996. The feedback from the aviation community was so overwhelmingly positive that the afloat community

decided to provide ships and submarines with a similar tool. The site was beta-tested in the summer of 2003 and was launched in October. Since then, 19,154 Sailors from 55 ships and submarines have completed surveys. We currently have the crews of eight ships taking the survey.

The fleet's response has been extremely positive. For example, the skipper of a frigate said, "The results were very informative and will be used to improve the ship's safety program." A submarine skipper said, "Thank you for this tool. I appreciate the opportunity for candid, blind, non-attributable feedback. I think it gives me a good sense of how we are communicating."

ASCAS is web-based, which allows us to match the responses to each question from one ship to the responses from other ships of its type, its fleet, type commander, or the rest of the afloat Navy. It takes Sailors about 25 minutes to complete the 66 questions in the survey. The first 60 questions ask you to grade the particular question on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "strongly

Assess Ship's Safety Climate

disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree.” Here’s a sample question: “Command leadership is actively involved in the safety program and management of safety matters.” The last six questions ask for Sailors' comments on the overall performance of the ship’s safety program. The questions are based on OpNavInst 5100.19D (NAVOSH Program Manual for Forces Afloat), covering the administrative requirements, as well as the effectiveness of the ship's safety program.

To ensure the survey’s reliability, 60 percent of the crew must be surveyed. It takes an average of 19 days for a ship to complete the survey. The fastest ship did it in six days, and the slowest took 52 days. It depends on the ship’s schedule and the number of computers available to the crew.

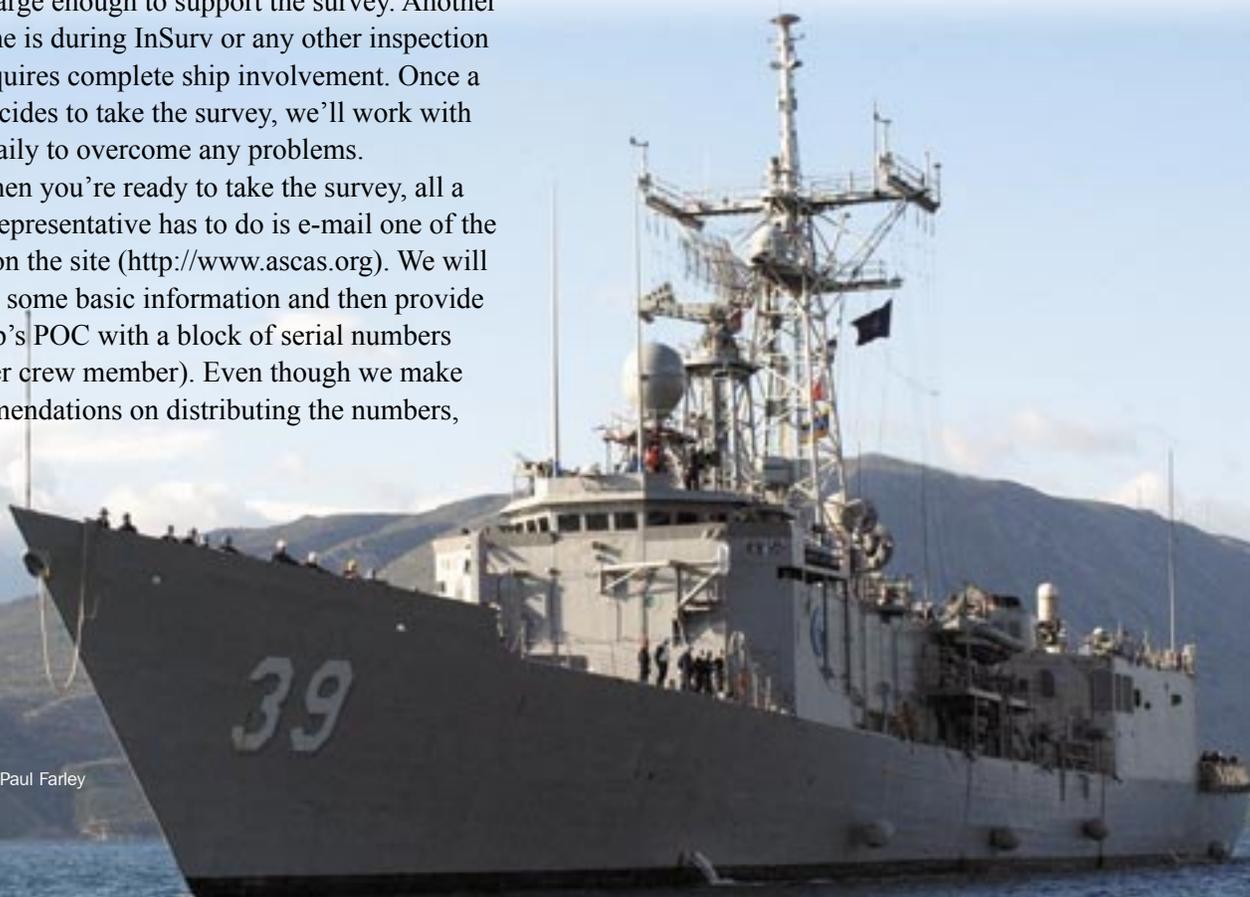
When should a ship take the survey? Schedules always are demanding, but some periods of time are better than others. It’s almost impossible for a ship to take the survey while at sea: The bandwidth is not large enough to support the survey. Another bad time is during InSurv or any other inspection that requires complete ship involvement. Once a ship decides to take the survey, we’ll work with them daily to overcome any problems.

When you’re ready to take the survey, all a ship's representative has to do is e-mail one of the POCs on the site (<http://www.ascas.org>). We will request some basic information and then provide the ship’s POC with a block of serial numbers (one per crew member). Even though we make recommendations on distributing the numbers,

you decide how it’s done. In order to give honest responses, the Sailors must feel that the survey will protect their privacy, so don’t assign numbers to people—let them pick one. The individual survey results, including demographic data, are completely anonymous to the command. Once your ship starts the survey, we will update you daily, letting you know how many surveys are complete and what groups have completed them.

Once the survey is completed (60 percent of the crew surveyed), the CO will receive e-mail from us, giving him or her access and directions to the site. Aggregate results are available to the CO to use for comparing one ship to its peers or to other segments of the fleet.

ASCAS is still growing. We’re looking at adding this survey into our safety surveys and eventually into cultural workshops, which will be introduced to the fleet later this year. ■



Navy photo by Paul Farley