



November 10, 2016

Enabling technology is focus of second annual FRC safety meeting



Rear Adm. Michael Zarkowski, Commander, Fleet Readiness Centers (COMFRC), answers a question from Chief Petty Officer Douglas Wright, Fleet Readiness Center (FRC) West Power Plants Division's production chief and safety officer, on production requirements and promoting a culture of safety in the FRC. More than 25 senior safety officers from eight Fleet Readiness Centers (FRC) sites worldwide and representatives from DoD attended the 2nd Annual Safety Director Meeting at FRC Aviation Support Equipment in Solomons Island, Maryland, Nov. 1-3. The FRCs are on track to having one of COMFRC's safest years ever with incident rates well below the Bureau of Labor Statistics' averages for the Aerospace, Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul Industry. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)

NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md. — More than 25 senior safety officers from eight Fleet Readiness Centers (FRC) sites worldwide and representatives from DoD attended the Annual Safety Director Meeting at FRC Aviation Support Equipment in Solomons Island, Maryland, Nov. 1-3.

Commander, Fleet Readiness Centers (COMFRC) Director for Safety and Regulatory Compliance Mitch Bauman said the event was held to provide safety officers with a forum to share ideas and train them on the Safety Management System (SMS)—a safety reporting software recently introduced into the FRCs.

Safety, he said, is an enabler of readiness by precluding the costly impacts of injuring artisans, Sailors and Marines. It will help minimize the costly mistakes in damaging



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aircraft, engine and components and must be embedded throughout the command, he said. "Using SMS will make reporting easier, increase accuracy and give us actionable data across all of COMFRC." Already in use at seven of the FRCs, it is scheduled to be introduced at all FRC sites by the end of the year. Petty Officer 1st Class Henry Larreynaga, who recently became the lead safety officer for FRC Northwest, welcomed the SMS training. "SMS hasn't been introduced to our command yet, so this is new guidance for us," he said. "By listening and learning from other FRCs who are already using it, we have a better idea of how to get it running right and properly establish its use."

One of SMS's tools, iAuditor, will improve the ease and accuracy of recordkeeping in the FRCs. Dina Geilenkirchen, FRC Mid-Atlantic safety director, said she is looking forward to using this feature. "With iAuditor, we will be able to conduct inspections using tablets instead of on paper. That not only will help us save time, but be able to get the word out to our workforce and to other FRC safety officers quicker," she said.

Safety regulations and compliance, COMFRC safety goals for 2017 and common issues across all FRCs were also discussed. "All FRCs have similar challenges," FRC East safety director Luc Desilets said. "For example, FRC Southwest is looking into stands for V-22 maintenance. FRC East already has them, and we shared our experiences with them. We have a responsibility to reach out to each other."

For Larreynaga, one of the most surprising facts he learned at the meeting was the amount COMFRC must shoulder each year due to injuries. "Hearing that injuries cost roughly \$10 million a year out of our budgets and that by reducing them by 10 percent could return a million dollars to us really got me thinking," he said. "I'll make it a point to educate my command that there is a bigger picture to safety and budgets that they don't see."

Efforts to reduce those numbers are paying off. Bauman said that COMFRC is on track to having one of its safest years ever with incident rates well below the Bureau of Labor Statistics' averages for the Aerospace, Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul Industry.

Rear Adm. Michael Zarkowski, Commander, Fleet Readiness Centers, commended the leads in his remarks during the meeting and urged them to stay diligent. "2016 was a good year, but you can never declare victory when it comes to safety and quality. We need to keep that momentum up as we close out 2016 and start 2017," he said.

He also reminded them that safety and quality must be foremost in every aspect of work and must never be compromised. "Safety is the most critical thing that we do. It is the beginning of everything," he said. "Production is the scorecard and gets us the visibility. But it means nothing if we don't do it safely."

No FRC stands alone when it comes to safety, Zarkowski said. "Our goal is enable artisans to have an incident-free career so that they can enjoy the retirement they deserve,"



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he said. “At the end of the day, there is only one scorecard we all are responsible for when it comes to safety and readiness. You play a role in that.”