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NAVAL AVIATION NEWS
ARTICLE ON
FLEET SUPPORT

"SUPPORTING THE FLEET"

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE
NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND

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You're ready to taxi for an afternoon 1v1 ACM training mission when your oxygen mask malfunctions. A troubleshooter double times to the flight equipment shop to get a spare so the mission can continue. You get back from your flight, find the parachute rigger, and tell him what went wrong with your mask. It's the combination inhalation/exhalation valve. It seems to be sticking in a position that prevents oxygen from entering the mask. This is not a problem you want to have in an intensive ACM environment under high Gs. It's definitely a safety-of-flight issue requiring that a Hazardous Material Report (HMR)/Engineering Investigation (EI) be initiated. The EI is done and it turns up an inherent design flaw which caused the valve to chatter and stick. As a result, a fleet support project receives funding and a redesigned valve is on the way.

~~You've probably heard of HMRs and EIs before, perhaps even initiated one yourself, but where do they end up and do they do any good? Yes. Is this another paper drill? Yes. But ask the folks from the Life Support Systems Fleet Support Team back at NAWCAD PAX River, MD, and you'll hear a resounding, "Just do it!"~~

*2 questions
only
1 answer*

The paperwork is what breaks loose funds to permanently fix problems that you experience with your flight gear. And this isn't just at PAX. There are Crew Systems' Fleet Support Teams at NAWCWD China Lake, CA (Parachutes and Harnesses), NWSC Crane, IN (Night Vision Systems), and NADEP Cherry Point, NC (Escape Systems). Complaining about it to your squadron mate won't fix the problem - reporting it to the proper fleet support team will. That's all fine and well, you say, but what do you do about a problem that doesn't fit the guidelines of an HMR? Well, remember the SPH-3 helmet, you helo bubbas? Big, bulky, heavy, lots of hot spots? Sure it was great for building that massive Schwarzenegger neckline, but not for a four-hour mission while on goggles.

Enter the HGU-84. Lighter, sleeker, bungee visors, an integrated chin/nape strap - all good stuff that was reserved for the fast-movers in the past. How did this new piece of equipment come to be? The venue for a totally new item of Life Support Equipment like the HGU-84 is the Aircrew Systems Operators' Advisory Group or OAG. The OAG is held approximately every 18 months. Representatives from rotary wing, fixed wing ejection, and fixed wing non-ejection squadrons gather to define deficiencies and set requirements. The meeting generates a 'Top 10' list which the Aircrew Systems Program Manager, PMA-202, uses to justify his budget to Congress. It's the voice of the fleet, not some desk jockey randomly deciding what the fleet needs.

Another OAG success story is the flight suit. A few years back, this tri-service item needed an update, and after the item manager decided to do it, voila, the Modified Enhanced Air Force Flight Suit (MEAFFS) hit the fleet. To say that aviators complained about it after that would be a gigantic understatement. Even though it didn't make the top ten at the OAG, the overwhelming cry for help was heard and the PAX River Fleet Support Team went to work digging through the bureaucracy and red tape to find out where and who changed the patterns. After many phone calls, letters, and meetings, the problem got fixed. The old CWU-27 patterns are back in production and only small quantities of MEAFFS remain to be drawn down before the "new" old flight suit is issued.

Another place to voice dissatisfaction is the In-Service Management Panels or IMPs. Where the OAG is primarily attended by aviators, the Crew Systems IMPs are designed more towards the maintenance guys, the riggers, seat mechs, and avionics techs. There are three different IMPs held every year: Life Support Systems, Escape Systems, and Night Vision Systems. Proposed action chits delineating the problems and proposed solutions are submitted by squadrons through their chain of command to the ALSS or avionics TYCOMs for sponsorship. If the executive committee accepts a chit, it is folded among existing chits and prioritized - funding is applied accordingly.

So you say you can't break away to attend those OAGs and IMPs? You never seem to hear about them soon enough to get a chit submitted? You have an idea for a simple mod, which, if someone would only listen, life would be a dream for us all? Well, my friend, there is a program for you. It's called the RAMEC. That stands for Rapid Action Minor Engineering Change. It's the fleet's version of a self-help program. For a modification to be incorporated via RAMEC, it has to meet certain criteria. First, all parts and materials must be available through normal supply channels. There can be no kits required and the maximum cost to modify a single item cannot be more than \$1500. There are other requirements, but those are the main ones. If your idea meets these requirements, put it in writing and submit it through your chain to your ALSS TYCOM for sponsorship to the appropriate fleet support team. There it will be

prototyped and evaluated; providing no problems are found, an Aircrew Systems Change will be generated for fleet-wide incorporation.

Now that you no longer take for granted that something will always work, or that the latest and greatest equipment is in the fleet, who's the most important person to call when something breaks, doesn't work, or needs alteration?

Here's a good place to start:

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*Escape Systems: Steve Wickizer, Logistics Manager, DSN 451-8731
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*You can access the Aircrew Systems Team on the World Wide Web at
[HTTP://www.nawcad.navy.mil](http://www.nawcad.navy.mil): 462/PMA-202.*