Safety & Environmental Newsletter

January 2012 Issue

Situational Awareness

What is Situational Awareness and what does it involve? Situational Awareness is the ability to determine what is going on around you, and it involves an active role in identifying and understanding your surroundings.

For the last several months Wallops has experienced minor mishaps such as contusions, sprains, strains, abrasions and stings. Being more aware of the surrounding work environment may have reduced some of these injuries.

So how can Situational Awareness benefit the employees at Wallops, improve how we do our jobs , and keep us safe? This can be done by being aware of our surroundings and the task we are performing, and doing it safely. Application of situational awareness can be applied in any job.

At Wallops jobs consist of varying categories, some are on site and many are at off- site locations. Weather conditions in many areas require Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) due to the potential for frostbite, slips, trips and falls, and other minor or more serious injuries. Paying attention to the requirements to perform the job is just the beginning of Situational Awareness. Employees should use proper procedures in carrying out all task, perform each task safely while keeping in mind the safety of others, and identify and report any hazards.

Whether working on constructing a launch pad, clearing debris, or launching rockets, Situational Awareness can make the difference in success or failure. Practicing Situational Awareness can foster a safer work environment for all employees, and when we lose it we increase the potential for human error and mishaps increase.

Wallops Upcoming Training

ESD Training - February 21, 2012
0830–1230

SAFETY QUOTE

"LUCK RUNS OUT BUT SAFETY IS GOOD FOR LIFE "

Got a Safety Question?
Open any browser and type the word Safety into the URL box, and hit enter.

Safety Editor, Olive Finney

"No Accident Today"

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MEC HAZARDS AT WALLOPS?!

Wallops has an active Safety culture to protect employees from known work hazards, and we need to be aware of some unknown hazards that are hiding in our surrounding environment as well. Prior to NASA obtaining ownership of Wallops in 1959, the U.S. Navy operated both the Chincoteague Naval Air Station and the Naval Aviation Ordnance Test Station to conduct research and development of aircraft and weapons systems from 1942-1959. The U.S. Navy's work resulted in numerous areas on the Main Base and Wallops Island where hazardous items such as practice bombs, spent munitions debris, and potentially unexploded ordnance (UXO) still remain. All of these items are collectively referred to as Munitions and Explosives of Concern (MEC). The hazard with these former military MEC is that they may still contain live explosives. All employees need to be aware that these hazards exist, and how to respond.

The Environmental Office has been working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) since 2001 and has mapped numerous areas where munitions were historically handled or used. In addition, MEC has also been found in some unlikely locations after the MEC was inadvertently excavated with fill dirt and deposited at various construction projects at Wallops. To avoid MEC, contact the Wallops Environmental Restoration Program (x1987), obtain an Excavation Permit (xHELP) and always use caution during any excavation activities.

WHAT DOES MEC LOOK LIKE AND SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

MEC can look like a typical piece of scrap metal; therefore, all employees should become familiar with what MEC might look like. Historically at Wallops, the U.S. Navy used various forms of ordnance ranging from 50 caliber to 20 and 30 millimeter (mm) munitions to as large as 2,000 pound bombs, including napalm filled devices. Both 20 mm and 30 mm fragments are routinely found at Wallops.

20 mm Fragment

In addition, numerous Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs) were identified on the south end of Wallops Island and a 250 pound bomb was identified on the north end of Wallops Island. To date, all of these MEC items have been identified as inert; however, only a trained UXO technician can make this determination.

250 pound Bomb

Most of the MEC will not look like a typical bomb or a bullet. Over the years, the MEC will have rusted, corroded, and broken into smaller pieces that may appear to be just rusty pieces of metal. Use caution with any unknown item.

RPGs

Aged 20 mm Fragment

RECOGNIZE, RETREAT, AND REPORT

If you encounter anything you suspect could be MEC, **DON'T TOUCH IT!** Immediately call 911 from any Wallops telephone or (757) 824-1333 from an outside line or cell phone. Protective Services Division and the Safety Office will respond. Always remember to **Recognize, Retreat and Report!**

Environmental Editor: Marianne Simko