



Press Release

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Streamlines maintenance for aircraft carriers

NAVAIR Lakehurst develops computerized hand-held system

When NAVAIR Lakehurst fleet liaison representatives offered the ship's aircraft launch and recovery equipment (ALRE) Maintenance personnel on board the aircraft carrier Harry. S. Truman (CVN 75) a computerized way to record, collate, certify, store and forward results maintenance readings that they wrote on paper forms, they welcomed the opportunity.

They joined a pilot program to use handheld customized personal data assistants (PDAs) to log, upload and sign-off critical ALRE equipment data readings for analysis. This automated maintenance checks for aircraft launch and recovery equipment (ALRE) on the nation's most advanced nuclear-powered aircraft carrier.

"This ship has never been afraid to try new things," explained ABEC(AW) Joe Osborn of NAVAIR's fleet liaison office. "The CVN 75 almost always jumps on NAVAIR programs before others."

Almost two months earlier, an integrated government/industry team consisting of ALRE fleet liaison representatives, software engineers from NAVAIR Lakehurst and Specialty Systems Inc., and NAVSEA system integration engineers from Antech Systems, Inc. began the effort to move this project from the drawing board and onto the ship within two months.

“The schedule was a real challenge,” admitted Chris Reymann, project manager for this initiative, located at NAVAIR Lakehurst, “especially getting permission to put a pilot program on board the carrier, obtaining technical waivers, training ship’s personnel, and providing support for underway exercises.” All the sailors accepted the new system and gave it rave reviews within days. “The new system is excellent,” said ABE1 Walter Fadrowski, leading petty officer. “It saves time and informs us when readings are close to being bad and this is a huge improvement.”

The new system puts all of the maintenance check information on a customized personal data assistant (PDA). The mechanic looks up everything he needs by pushing a button. After completing a check, he can link the PDA to a computer. Capturing all the maintenance information electronically also makes it easier for NAVAIR at a shore site to review it. The PDAs replace pencils and reams of completed forms so sailors can concentrate on keeping the carrier’s arresting gear in good working order. “The sailor simply e-mails the information to me and we can begin to solve a potentially crippling problem,” said Osborn. “The Navy has been doing paper-based maintenance the same way for years. Using this new system will cut down on work hours and transcription errors.”

Currently, personnel spend 132,000 hours each year completing and maintaining this maintenance documentation. They do this while performing 3,000 maintenance actions on launch, recovery, and visual landing systems on every sea deployment. After operating equipment 12 hours each day, maintenance personnel spend hours more maintaining it, so they appreciate any technology that improves speed and accuracy. It greatly improves their quality of life at sea.

Called AutoREAD, the system was designed, developed and deployed in 120 days, a requirement for the Navy’s eBusiness Pilot programs. “This project is part of an on-going logistics modernization effort centered in aviation maintenance,” explained Chris Reymann. “It meets many of the Navy objectives to reduce workload, increase data accuracy, and improve the quality of life for sailors on board ships.”

For Reymann, it also improves data communication from a ship to shore-based support where it can help engineers evaluate ALRE equipment and parts.

Based on the success of the system onboard CVN 75, Reymann believes the Navy will implement the system on all carriers. He believes, eventually, the Navy will make it the standard way to perform all maintenance.

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“NAVAIR provides advanced warfare technology through the efforts of a seamless, integrated, worldwide network of aviation technology experts. From professional training to carrier launch; from sensor data to precision targeting; from aircraft and weapons development to successful deployment; from real-time communication to aircraft recovery NAVAIR provides dominant combat effects and matchless capabilities to the American warfighter.”

