REPORT THAT COMMON GROUND MISHAP ASAP!

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What is an ASAP? The ASAP is an acronym for the Aviation Safety Awareness Program. Many of us know what an ASAP report is and the reasons one should be completed. Such a reason can be described as reporting a situation or condition that, in the course of your work, you deem unsafe. Some see ASAP reporting as just another cumbersome requirement that does not actually do anything for the junior Sailors and Marines, believing no change is going to come from submitting them. Not true at all! There are several examples of how ASAP reports helped change how the Department of the Navy does things. We can't discuss all of them here, however, one example I will point out is the new MH-60S gunner's seat. Conditions reported by flight crews and maintenance via ASAP reports played a significant role in getting a new seat to the fleet in record time.

A common misconception surrounding ASAP is that units (safety officers or commanding officers) can edit, delete, or otherwise "filter" reports from upper echelon leadership after they are submitted. This is only true in the sense that aviation safety officers or ground safety officers will remove identifying information. Only the data that could lead to the identity of those involved or the report's author is removed. The member writing the report does have the option to remain anonymous. When you write an ASAP report, it is still your unfettered account of what you believe is an unsafe situation, practice or procedural noncompliance that the chain of command, at the unit level and higher echelons, should be aware of.

Additionally, the Naval Safety Command can now escalate ASAP reports to hazard reports (HAZREPs) if it is determined a HAZREP would be the better avenue for resolving the hazard. That said, the chain of command could not fix what they probably do not know about. Several well written ASAP reports on hazards have a high potential to fix issues that add risks to our daily tasks and could cause ground hazards.

There are many situations where risks go unidentified and a ground hazard could ensue. A few are discussed below to help identify some you may come across in your day-to-day operations.

Improper Data Management

One risk or hazard that has been discussed a few times by my peers is improper data management, where depot-level repair units within the Navy and Marine Corps have not implemented the Optimized Organizational Maintenance Activity (OOMA) to document maintenance action. This lack of OOMA use creates a documentation backlog when an aircraft completes PMI (planned maintenance interval) and is then returned to the unit with a large stack of paperwork. The paperwork must then be sifted through for required logbook

entries, completed technical directives, removed and/or replaced components and many other administrative requirements that document the maintenance performed during PMI. The unit is then required to "hand jam," manually input, all of these maintenance actions that weren't documented into the OOMA system.

The "hand jamming" entries provide opportunities for the receiving unit to miss something that could have been completed by PMI. This process of humans entering data from paperwork received well after the maintenance was completed opens the door wide for human error to occur, and therefore increases risks to the safety of crews flying in the aircraft and the aircraft's reliability. This situation can potentially lead to any number of incidents such as overflying aircraft components or missing the proper incorporation of technical directives.

This is a prime example of an issue that could be corrected if it was reported with enough supporting documentation to fund access to OOMA for depot-level repair units. Depot-level aviation maintenance facilities set up with OOMA would allow PMI contractors to document the maintenance they are performing as it is completed and reduce the number of times people were manipulating the data, therefore reducing the risks of multiple people entering data.

Funding Shortfalls
We have all been in units that have had budgetary issues. This shortfall in funding restricts the proper outfitting of maintainers and flyers with needed tools, clothing or safety equipment. At times, this may not be something that could cause a severe risk of triggering a ground hazard, but it very well could trigger increased risks as a unit changes areas of operation. A prime example is a unit that normally operates in a warm climate deploys to a cold environment without the requisite cold weather gear. Such situations have led to a few HAZREPs, but there is no information to make a programmatic or budgetary change. Writing an ASAP or HAZREP on such issues can further highlight funding or equipment issues and give the data points so leadership can incorporate policies aimed at reducing the exposure hazards for our Sailors and Marines.

Workarounds
Another concern seen throughout the fleet are "workarounds." These can be characterized as community-accepted in-house steps to circumvent certain procedures that we do not have time or the equipment for because we need to get the job done! Flight crews and maintainers are faced with situations where perceived pressure from leadership causes them

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to accept non-standard operations. Yes, we work in environments that are inherently dangerous, however, as well-trained service members, we must use our training and experience to manage risks appropriately and adapt our environment to be the safest it can be.

To help achieve this, the naval aviation enterprise has developed procedures to guide aviation maintenance technicians and air crewmembers when conducting maintenance or missions. Following these procedures is called procedural compliance and procedural compliance is key to ensuring mission success because they already have a high degree of risk management built into them. To a great extent, engineers and leadership have put these procedural guidelines in place based on past experiences which have resulted in hazards or mishaps. The phrase "NATOPS is written in blood" comes to mind. The antithesis of this, and frankly a very dangerous practice, is accepting the lack of procedural compliance and allowing "workarounds" to become the norm. History shows normalized deviation has led to numerous mishaps that negatively affected our force readiness.

When questions arise surrounding the accuracy of our procedures, we as the "boots on the ground" maintainers and operators must bring these issues to leadership's attention. One of the easiest ways workers and operators can bring these situations to the chain of command is by submitting an ASAP report. ASAP reporting allows for real-world influencers, our Sailors and Marines, to shape future best practices and procedures, because they are reporting issues from the deckplate level. ASAP reports can lead to HAZREPs which recommend changes or direct squadron personnel to submit technical publications discrepancy reports. Today, we all look for ways to influence the "why" behind what drives our day-to-day operations. Your experience could prevent a shipmate from injuring themselves, someone else or damaging equipment, so take the time to report your experiences on ASAP whenever there is a situation that warrants the need to be reported.

The above lists only a few scenarios where ASAP reporting could increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our organization. There are situations that happen all the time that people may not report. They could be as small as your boot tread being worn out and supply has a backlog of boot orders or FOD in a toolbox being continually overlooked as par for the course. Maybe even a "line rat" catching themselves checking out the wrong servicing unit for the intended job, then returning it without saying anything. Or possibly, not having enough ready-for-use equipment such as ground support equipment, test equipment or special tools which adds significant time pressure to troubleshooting and repairing aircraft. Whatever the hazard is, it is worth taking a few minutes to write an ASAP report to help leadership identify

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the risks the organization is facing or trying to manage at an inappropriate level. Take an active role in forming the future of our Navy and Marine Corps by using ALL the tools our leadership has given us to fix the issues YOU see. If you don't take the time to report such instances, who will?

To access ASAP, go here (https://asap.safety.af.mil). You can also download the ASAP app to your smartphone, called "Airman Safety App" in the App store. (Note: it is an Air Force app.)