

# Performing Under Perceived Pressure in Aviation Maintenance



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By Senior Chief Aviation Machinist's Mate Anil Ramdeen  
Naval Safety Command



## PERCEIVED PRESSURE ---



U.S. Navy Aviation Machinist's Mate 3rd Class Anthony Avilatorques the flex-coupling of an MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter in the hangar bay aboard the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68) April 5, 2023. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Caylen McCutcheon)

Perceived pressure refers to a subjective sense of urgency and stress experienced by maintenance personnel when faced with tight schedules, operational demands or external factors such as leadership direction or priorities that may influence maintainers' decision-making and workflow. Working under perceived pressure in aviation maintenance can introduce a range of challenges that may impact the quality, safety and overall effectiveness of maintenance tasks. These challenges can seriously affect an organization where precision and accuracy are paramount. Here are some potential issues that may arise when working under perceived pressure in aviation maintenance:

- **Reduced Attention to Detail:** Under pressure, technicians may be more prone to overlooking small details or skipping procedural steps. This pressure can lead to errors such as improperly secured components, missed inspections, inaccurate measurements and skipped steps (especially notes, cautions and warnings), all of which can compromise aircraft safety and reliability of the aircraft.

- **Impaired Decision-Making:** Pressure can impair cognitive function and lead to rushed decision-making. Technicians might opt for quick solutions without thoroughly assessing the

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situation or considering potential long-term implications. This factor can result in suboptimal decisions that compromise safety.

- **Communication Breakdowns:** Effective communication is crucial in aviation maintenance, especially when coordinating with team members, aircrew and other stakeholders. Perceived pressure can hinder clear communication, leading to misunderstandings, misinterpretations and missed instructions.

- **Increased Stress and Fatigue:** Working under pressure can elevate stress levels, which, if not managed, can contribute to mental fatigue and burnout. Fatigued technicians are likelier to make mistakes, experience reduced cognitive function and have diminished reaction times.

- **Tunnel Vision:** Pressure can create a phenomenon known as “tunnel vision,” where technicians become excessively focused on a single task or problem to the detriment of other critical aspects. Tunnel vision can result in overlooking broader safety concerns or interconnected issues.

- **Inadequate Time for Problem-Solving:** Complex maintenance issues may require careful analysis and problem-solving. Perceived pressure can limit the time for thorough troubleshooting, leading to rushed solutions that might not fully address the underlying problem.

- **Noncompliance with Procedures:** Adhering to established procedures is vital to ensure consistent and safe outcomes in aviation maintenance. Under pressure, technicians might be tempted to take shortcuts or deviate from established procedures to save time, potentially compromising safety and quality. The enforcement of aviation maintenance standards heavily relies on adherence to technical manuals, aiming to guarantee safety and uniformity. In high-pressure situations, technicians may unintentionally depart from these manuals, potentially resulting in compliance problems that lead to negative career and operational consequences. In the high-stakes world of aviation maintenance, the risks associated with working under perceived pressure are significant. It's crucial for organizations to recognize these challenges and implement strategies to mitigate their impact, fostering an environment where technicians can perform at their best while upholding the highest standards of safety and quality.

- **Increased Risk of Human Error:** Pressure can increase the likelihood of human errors, even among highly skilled professionals. These errors can include miscalculations, misinterpretations or misalignments that can have cascading effects on the overall maintenance process.

- **Negative Impact on Well-Being:** Perceived pressure can have personal consequences on technicians' well-being, leading to stress-related health issues, decreased job satisfaction and reduced overall morale. This impact can create a cycle where decreased well-being further exacerbates pressure-related challenges.

- **Loss of Confidence:** If a technician makes mistakes under perceived pressure, it can lead to a loss of confidence in their abilities. This loss of self-assurance may persist well after the pressure subsides, affecting their performance with subsequent tasks.

On the following page, you will find some suggested strategies for excelling under perceived pressure.

