

PLANNED AND ORGANIZED GSE STORAGE PREVENTS CRUNCHES

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Planned and organized systems, program policies, and procedures are essential for any organization to ensure operations run as smoothly as possible. Whether it's something as simple as maintaining maintenance records, organizing an aircraft move, storing tools in a work center or using and maintaining ground support equipment, proper organization is essential for streamlining a task from start to finish. How many times have you gone to complete a task and realized that nothing that you need is where it is supposed to be? You have to look for the required materials because someone did not return them to the correct place, or even worse, the tools and materials you need don't have a designated place to be kept. Disorganization can lead to a lack of efficiency, property damage, and even injury.

Planning, organizing, and maintaining a proper storage area for Ground Support Equipment (GSE) helps ensure you can quickly and effectively use and maintain the GSE for pre-ops, aircraft maintenance, and aircraft staging. Space is at a premium on an aircraft carrier and the smallest mistake can lead to catastrophic results. Having GSE properly placed in a hangar, on a flight line, and on the flight deck helps ensure crews moving aircraft around will know where support equipment is located. It also helps them know the areas to avoid and to pay extra attention to when moving aircraft around the hangar, flight line, and flight deck. If organization on the flight deck is important, the hangar bay may be even more so. Whether for storing aircraft, or having the aircraft parked for planned maintenance, the hangar bay on an aircraft carrier is often packed from front to back and aircraft are stacked within inches of each other. In many cases, mishaps result from aircraft striking gear which is inappropriately stored near the aircraft or in the aircraft's travel path. Keeping the GSE in a designated place ensures that if something needs to be retrieved, it can be done so in a way to minimize contact with an aircraft, thereby reducing the chance of injury or damage.

Based on mishap and hazard reporting, damage often occurs when GSE is placed somewhere it should not be before or during operational checks such as flight control sweeps. When flight controls are moved, they come into contact with the piece of gear causing damage to the flight control surface and often the support equipment itself. Most, if not all, general servicing and handling aircraft maintenance publications provide pictures or diagrams where ground support equipment should be placed around aircraft, as well as cautions and warnings to be aware of when performing maintenance tasks. Additionally, many type wings have established standard operating procedures addressing the safety diamond/zone around the aircraft and how support equipment should be handled and placed within that safety diamond/zone. Adhering to these procedures isn't just recommended, it is mandatory.



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Organization of support equipment is not only necessary onboard a ship, but also during shore-based operations. While spaces are not as tight and movement is typically easier, ground support equipment that is improperly placed or stored, especially when in close proximity to aircraft, hangars, or even on the flight line, can result in damage or injury. Support equipment storage is typically located away from aircraft parking and hangar parking spots to help prevent mishaps. Support equipment, especially power carts, hydraulic test stands, tow tractors, and maintenance stands need to be positioned in a way that is efficient for the maintainer, but also effective in mitigating risk. If your unit doesn't have designated zones for GSE parking, recommend coordinating with all applicable stakeholders to establish one. Additionally, establishing a battle rhythm to verify GSE placement is essential to ensure compliance.

Not only should the gear be positioned and correctly stored but squadron personnel must properly secure aircraft and GSE by setting brakes, installing chocks, and chaining equipment as applicable. With the growing costs of assets and the declining number of experienced personnel to care of those assets, it is imperative we properly perform our daily maintenance routines while taking every effort possible to ensure effective operations. Ensuring we use designated, planned, and organized storage for our GSE will significantly contribute to the healthy materiel condition of aircraft and the safety of personnel.