

From Both Sides



Illustration by DM1(AW) Eulogio Devera, USS *Nimitz*

of the Coin: Prepare for InSurv!

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Before assignment to InSurv, I was the assistant safety officer, industrial hygienist, and afloat environmental-protection coordinator aboard an aircraft carrier. After completing an extended availability, we were scheduled for an InSurv material inspection. We received checklists and other preparatory materials three to four months before the inspection date.

The carrier's safety department handled all the ship's Navy occupational, safety, health (NavOSH), and environmental programs and used the checklists as a self-assessment to determine where we stood before the inspection. We even asked the Naval Medical Center, Portsmouth, to evaluate our industrial hygiene baseline survey, and we asked the ComNavAirLant safety representative to help identify our weak areas so we could strengthen them.

One way we prepared for InSurv was by regularly reviewing—sometimes bi-monthly and right up until inspection day—our 12 NavOSH programs and our general safety, traffic, recreational, and environmental-protection programs. This review would ready the ship for InSurv . . . or so we thought.

The InSurv team's Monday arrival began an exhausting, grueling week during which they inspected all material and administrative programs. The NavOSH and Navy Environmental Protection (NEP) Board (a department within InSurv) brought three industrial hygienists and numerous technicians for the inspection. Its first phase reviewed administrative programs for asbestos, lead, safety, traffic, gas-free engineering, tagout, and environment protection. Meanwhile, technicians scurried throughout the ship, measuring ventilation rates and the material conditions of our sculleries, galleys, waste-processing rooms,

and hazardous-material storerooms. After the administrative programs were reviewed, inspectors began their walk-throughs of the ship's industrial and general work spaces.

The inspection's second phase included InSurv teams scrutinizing our combat systems, engineering, and damage control operations. InSurv's NEP inspectors probed our compliance with OpNav Instructions 5100.19D and 5090.1B (*NavOSH Program Manual for Forces Afloat* and *Environmental and Natural Resources Program Manual*). While we all thought we did an excellent job of administering programs and monitoring their compliance, we determined the real effectiveness of a ship's safety program is found in the work spaces.

The inspection's final phase was the out-brief, when the major players told the captain how the ship fared overall. For this particular inspection, our ship did exceedingly well, thanks to the efforts of some 3,500 crew members.

My initial reaction aboard ship when InSurv was done was that the process was intrusive and unjust. In some instances, equipment about to be inspected worked fine the week before but then unexplainably broke or malfunctioned during the inspection. Another thing: No matter how often the word was passed to properly stow personal protective equipment, some would be found adrift in a space that twice had been checked and cleared before InSurv.

Sure, as a crew member I disliked the arduous InSurv ordeal. It included months of preparations to update reports, educate division safety petty officers to help prepare the ship, train the master-at-arms force to aid in the efforts, write instructions, hold training sessions, get the right people to schools, and complete personal qualification standards (PQS).

Once inspection week was done, we finally could breathe a sigh of relief. Though the months ahead were not to be as intense as during the inspection, we still maintained our excellent safety, hazardous materials, and environmental-protection programs. Completing the inspection, despite all the related stress, was a true achievement for the entire crew. It motivated the safety department—and others—to fix things, whether the fixes were to administrative problems or to broken equipment. Ironically, nine months later I transferred to the staff of the Board of Inspection and Survey; I then understood the purpose and value of these material inspections.

My first inspection as an InSurv NEP-board member was aboard a Spruance-class destroyer. My team arrived just as InSurv had done when reporting to my carrier. We met with the ship's operations/safety officer and began the administrative review of all NavOSH and environmental programs. We quickly established the ship was ill-prepared for our visit, and our shipboard representative displayed an almost carefree attitude toward us and the inspection's purpose.

Poor material condition of various pieces of equipment in industrial spaces also became readily apparent: We noted deficiencies with eyewash stations and deluge showers, and ventilation systems in many storerooms didn't meet Naval Sea Systems Command standards. We also found improv-

erly stowed hazardous materials and overall poor housekeeping, including not being secured for sea.

Since becoming an inspector, I have seen well-prepared ships excel, while others were only a few steps from experiencing a serious mishap. I also have learned what I could have done to better prepare my ship for InSurv, and I have seen collateral-duty safety officers struggling to keep up with the paperwork.

As a former "inspectee" and now an inspector, my view of InSurv has changed. Any ship's

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successful mission accomplishment hinges on maintaining its material condition and implementing—and adhering to—those programs and instructions designed to maximize material and crew readiness. While frequent personnel turnover and reduced funding constantly challenge our Sailors to maintain readiness, it can—and must—be done.

We wouldn't drive a car with bald tires, nor would we let anyone not qualified fly a jetliner. We also wouldn't want to embark an aircraft for a flight if we knew required pre-flight checks hadn't been made or unqualified people had attempted to make needed repairs. We should be as demanding in the care and operation of our Navy ships.

What was the secret aboard my carrier and some ships I have inspected? There was no secret. Passing marks were obtained because of good safety programs, a good attitude, and effective leadership, and preparation. You can't do it only for an InSurv inspection; you must practice it "24-7." 🇺🇸



Photo by Fred J. Klinkenberger Jr.