

Why Solid Matter Matters

By AT1(AW) John Williams

Do you remember studying the laws of physics in high school, college or for an EAWS board? Boyle's Law, Bernoulli's Principle, and others dealt with force and pressure, and we also learned two solid objects of matter cannot occupy the same space at the same time. Several months ago, a squadron maintainer tested this theory and found it still applies.

No, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand only so much stuff can fit into one particular space. Yet, people continuously try to disprove physics by slamming their cars into trees, light poles, or other cars. Our guy tried to disprove this law by using his head, literally!

This intrepid young fellow was working urgently to get an aircraft ready for a maintenance turn. An aircraft needed ground power, so he grabbed an NC-10 power cable and quickly ran toward the P-3C.

While rushing to complete the job, he watched the cable uncoil to make sure it didn't snag. However, he forgot to look for the many fixed antennas on the underside of the Orion and

ran into one of them.

He hit it hard enough to knock himself down and left him with a gaping head wound.

Corpsmen at the dispensary patched him up and got him back on his feet, but it took 21 staples to close the head wound. The injury was serious and preventable. The graphic photo of his head may be extreme, but it is meant to be.

Is there a lesson to be learned here?

Yes—one I hope no other maintainer repeats! No job is important enough to risk injury or death. Unfortunately, many Sailors believe bad things will happen only to other people. If you believe that line, you're setting yourself up to be the next victim.

Petty Officer Williams is the safety petty officer at VP-47.

Analyst's Comment: After reading this story, I think the most important lesson learned is to wear a cranial. I know the P-3 is a big airplane, but this incident proves that head protection is needed for anyone working on or around aircraft.—Cdr. Al Stephens, head of the aircraft maintenance and material division at the Naval Safety Center.

This head wound requiring 21 staples to close was caused by collision with an aircraft antenna empennage.

