

A Place for Everything, And Everything in Its Place

By AS1 Terry Doss

It was a usual day at sea: I had plenty of work to do in a limited amount of time. We were just a few weeks into cruise and had settled into a comfortable routine. Out of nowhere, the age-old malady and by-product of repetitive tasks, also known as complacency, afflicted some of my fellow shipmates. It started with an aircraft respot in the hangar bay and got worse with a call about our gear blocking the move. A portable, hydraulic power supply (Jenny) was in the spotting-dolly lane, so I sent my people to move it. Little did I suspect we might need the fire party before the job was done.

My people looked over the equipment and noticed someone had left open the oil-filler access panel on top of the Jenny, had removed the tie-down chains, and had placed them atop the unit. The SE team repositioned the Jenny but left the tie-down chains on top, just in case it had to be moved again.

These events served as an open invitation for “Murphy” to jump in. One of the tie-down chains fell through the oil-filler access panel on top of the Jenny, touched the starter solenoid and frame, and initiated fireworks equal to those on the Fourth of July.

The Jenny arced and sparked, resulting in a Class-C fire that burned the positive and negative battery cables and melted the battery post.

People in the hangar, V-3 folks specifically, noticed the Jenny was on fire and immediately reported the casualty to hangar-deck control. Like a well-choreographed ballet, Sailors moved the Jenny to an open section of the hangar bay, pulled out hoses, and used CO₂ to extinguish the fire. Meanwhile, back-up personnel were setting Zebra. The hangar bay was congested, and without the quick response of these observant people, this incident could have been much worse.

Unfortunately, people place gear on top of SE all the time, and that practice has become too commonplace. Support equipment never should have chains placed or stored on top. We are asking for trouble



should this rule continue to be ignored.

A general rule of thumb to follow is, “If the support equipment doesn’t have non-skid on top of it, don’t place any gear on top.” 

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I don’t remember any publication, instruction or document that authorizes anything to be placed on top of support equipment. The problem with drivable or rolling stock is loose gear can fall off and can injure a Sailor or damage the equipment. Our database is filled with such cases, so don’t take any chances; keep support equipment free of any FOD.—Ed.

NA 00-80T-96, WP005 00, page 10, paragraph 43, reads, “Extra passengers or any loose gear on your tractor are hazards and are prohibited. They can fall off and be injured or damaged.”

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