

Director's Message



Putting on our 'game face'

Some things you never forget. One of those times for me was at 2 o'clock in the morning on January 2, 1964, at Camp Schwab, Okinawa, Japan. Second Lieutenant Howell had rolled out of the rack early to listen to the Cotton Bowl

game featuring the Texas Longhorns and the Midshipmen of Navy. Undefeated Texas was touted by several polls to be National Champions. Navy, led by Heisman Trophy winner Roger Staubach, had lost just one game and made a lot of noise in the weeks prior to the Cotton Bowl – saying that after they defeated Texas, they, and not the Longhorns, should be crowned as the champions.

Right before the game, the radio announcer (there was no satellite TV in those days) interviewed both coaches on the field. Wayne Hardin of Navy went into a long dissertation about how the challengers would become the new champions. After hearing this and being asked for his response, Texas coach Darrell Royal simply stated, "We're ready." Five thousand miles away I had a vivid picture in my mind of Coach Royal with his teeth clenched and his chin jutting out. I thought to myself, "DKR has his game face on!"

There comes a time in any situation when you have to stop all the rhetoric and put on your game face. In football parlance, that's when you put on your pads and start blocking and tackling people. In other words, you knock off the talk, come together as a team and take action.

That's our situation here at Johnson Space Center. The Columbia Accident Investigation Board's report is published. It is critical, credible and spells out recommendations for us to implement before we return to flight (RTF), as well as recommendations for us to improve our organization beyond RTF. The NASA leadership, with our participation, has drafted a comprehensive implementation plan to follow in fulfilling our compliance with the CAIB's recommendations. It's time to stop discussing what should be done and to take appropriate action according to our plan.

Keep in mind that we are not just "checking a block" with our compliance. We are not going to go back to business as usual. We intend to go well beyond the CAIB recommendations in raising the bar of professional excellence: we will redefine our engineering and safety processes and checks and balances, make additional improvements to the Shuttle, and improve our teamwork and communications at all levels. That last item might well be the most difficult and will take everyone's commitment to effect successfully. It is absolutely imperative that we do this, and I will be introducing several initiatives to help us improve in this regard.

We have significant challenges to overcome but together, working as a team, we will succeed. Let's put on our game face and go for it!

Beak sends...

APPEARING THIS MONTH IN OUR

Guest Space

Stacey Menard

Voluntary Protection Program External Coordinator



EDITOR'S NOTE: Now that the mishap investigation board has released its report regarding the tragic onsite death of a coworker last year, JSC's Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) External Coordinator Stacey Menard has provided an account below of the incident in an effort to keep the JSC community informed and to help prevent a similar event.

On August 29, 2002, Johnson Space Center lost a coworker due to severe electrical injuries sustained in a mishap on site. He was a construction contractor working to reconnect backup power generators for Building 37.

Here is what happened that day: Building 37 was receiving upgrades to its electrical system. The victim, a journeyman electrician, and his apprentice arrived at the job site mid-morning. They checked in with the foreman, who told them he had checked the junction box and it was "cold," meaning there was no electricity present. What the foreman didn't know until after the mishap was that he had used a painted conduit as a ground. That paint was enough of an insulator to give a false zero-current reading. The two electricians went to work without checking for voltage themselves or going into the building to lock the circuits closed.

Shortly after the journeyman and apprentice began working, the apprentice was shocked forcefully. He went into Building 37 to regroup while the journeyman finished connecting the wires in the generator. Soon after the apprentice came back outside, the journeyman was shocked severely. Emergency help was summoned immediately and arrived within minutes. The journeyman was taken to the hospital where he died of his injuries.

A Type A Mishap Board, chaired by Peter Allen from Marshall Space Flight Center, was formed to investigate the accident. The board's findings stated the dominant root cause of this mishap was the lax safety culture of the company. The culture allowed the journeyman and apprentice to feel comfortable without lockout/tagout protection, work on energized circuits without protective equipment and fail to report the unexpected hazard to their supervisor. The Occupational Safety and Health Association agreed, and gave the company seven serious safety violations and monetary penalties.

The board also found documentation shortcomings in contract deliverables and other drawings and a weak NASA construction contractor oversight process. Further, it determined that NASA's policy of treating short-term construction contractors as transient employees was not adequate.

JSC Center Director Jefferson D. Howell, Jr., called this event an unacceptable, preventable tragedy. He asked the Center Operations Directorate (COD), Procurement and Safety to implement the changes necessary to keep this from happening again. The JSC VPP flag that flies in front of Building 1 means that we work together as a community to keep these tragedies from happening.

How is JSC responding to improve these weak areas?

First, we have hired more inspectors to oversee the field work of construction contractors, and we have elevated the reporting of safety and health plan violations. In cases where the safety violation is severe, some individuals have been asked to leave the site.

Two Continuous Improvement Teams, chaired by COD, are in place. The first team's charter is to bring construction contractors into JSC's VPP-driven safety and health culture. COD construction contractor workers now receive a mandatory safety briefing before getting their JSC badges.

The second team was formed to look at improving our configuration control process to ensure that all facility drawings are correct, updated and input into the system in a timely manner.

Public Affairs Office

Your Communication Source

PAO has been busy building new products and enhancing our services for you – our ambassadors to the public.

Stay Tuned: You'll be hearing more about our tools in the weeks and months ahead, including a message from our Public Affairs Director Dan Carpenter in the next issue of the *Roundup*.

