

Team Building at NATTC



Photo by Joy White

By Joy White

Teamwork is paramount in every Navy community, but nowhere is it more evident than on the flight decks of aircraft carriers and amphibious assault ships—the leading edge of America’s forward presence overseas. In particular, two shipboard jobs could not be done without a cohesive team effort: air traffic control, and fire-fighting/crash and salvage.

When flight operations are underway, air traffic control teams have plenty of opportunities to keep their skills sharp, but they benefit from refresher training during “down” periods. On the other hand, members of crash and salvage teams train on and off the ship to maintain skills they hope never to use in real life. One thing these teams have in common is a

need for building and strengthening the bond between their members. This is where team-building training at the Naval Air Technical Training Center (NATTC), NAS Pensacola, Fla., comes in.

The value of team-building training was evident as several members of the air traffic control teams from *John F. Kennedy* (CV 67) and *Kearsarge* (LHD 3) and the crash and salvage crew on board *Kitty Hawk* (CV 63) attended training at NATTC in March. “We had four months of yard time, plus we have had several people transfer aboard,” explained *Kennedy*’s ACC (AW) David Lombard. The two-week air traffic control course “was an excellent opportunity for us to stay current and keep the team working together.”

The *Kennedy* and *Kearsarge* teams practiced crew coordination


in handling different flight scenarios using NATTC’s interactive computer system. As they worked in darkened labs bathed in muted red, green and yellow light, the *Kitty Hawk* crash and salvage crew was sweltering in insulated safety gear while fighting roaring flames during aircraft firefighting shipboard team training. The intensive, five-day course was invaluable in shaping *Kitty Hawk*’s team, since most of the carrier’s 30 attendees were new Sailors recently assigned to the crash and salvage crew. CWO2 David Livingston was amazed at his shipmates’ reaction to the training: “This is a very young group; five days ago, it wasn’t even a team. The change in attitude is astounding.”

Team-building training gives students a learning environment

away from the routine distractions aboard ship, providing concentrated experience. “We can work on some of the crash and salvage training back at the ship,” said ABH1 (AC) Rodney Molina of *Kitty Hawk*, “but the firefighting and rescue training is so real, you have to experience it.”

Whether facing a wall of smoke and flame to rescue a shipmate

while trying to keep ordnance on an aircraft from exploding, or facing the challenge of keeping cool while coordinating multiple aircraft, dedication and a strong teamwork ethic are of the utmost importance. The team-building training provided by NATTC ensures that today’s air traffic control and crash and salvage teams have the necessary skills for success.

ACC (AW/SW) Carresqual Dixon of *Kearsarge* concluded: “If I could tell the rest of the fleet one thing about this training, I’d say, ‘If you have some down time, requisition some billets and get down to NATTC.’” 

Ms. White is NATTC’s Public Affairs Officer.

Joy White

Opposite, *Kitty Hawk’s* crash and salvage crew members get together for a motivating “ABs’ yell” during team-building training at NATTC. Right, labs simulating the air traffic control centers aboard an aircraft carrier and amphibious ship provide a realistic setting for practice in crew coordination. Below, Sailors learn to work as a team to douse burning “ordnance” with water to keep it from “exploding.” Heat sensors on the ordnance allow instructors to track the students’ progress.

Scott D. Hallford

