

## Chief of Naval Operations Awards Patuxent River Naval Air Station for Exceptional Safety Program

As Occupational Safety and Health Director of Patuxent River Naval Air Station (NAS), Mike Quigley knows that mishaps occur. He also knows that they can cost time, money and lives. He and his staff are proud that for the second consecutive year they are among the recipients of the Chief of Naval Operation's Award for *Achievement in Occupational Safety Ashore*.

NAS commanding officer, Capt. Paul Roberts, credits Quigley and his staff with leading an installation-wide effort to make safety a top priority. "Mike Quigley and his staff have done a super job of communicating safety needs, working with all the commands,



*Capt. Roberts (center) and members of Patuxent River Occupational Safety & Health staff*

keeping up awareness of safety issues and addressing these issues," Capt. Roberts said. "But safety is really everyone's job... Everyone on the base is participating; or we wouldn't have received the recognition."

Although the commendations cite Patuxent River's exceptionally low mishap rate, Quigley believes it was the Occupational Safety & Health Department's broad range of operations that made them stand out. "They looked at our total safety program – not just the facts and figures associated with mishap rates, but some of the innovative approaches that we take," he explained.

The Occupational Safety & Health staff oversees dozens of different safety initiatives. Many of these efforts focus on areas not traditionally considered to be "occupational" issues. These include such diverse programs as workstation inspections, laser and radiation safety programs, explosives safety audits, fire prevention workshops and bicycle safety "rodeos."



When mishaps do occur at Patuxent River, they are treated very seriously, according to Capt. Roberts. “For example, any time we have some kind of a mishap where someone loses five days or more, the person who had the mishap, their supervisor, and Occupational Safety & Health specialists all meet with me in a roundtable. We discuss what happened, why it happened, what we can do to prevent it in the future, and if there’s any root cause that we’ve overlooked.”



Quigley finds that Patuxent River’s emphasis on Research and Development

presents special safety challenges. Because many of the projects on base are in new and unexplored areas, there are seldom tested standards to follow. “We have to be able to adapt to the unique things our scientists and engineers are doing, and try to put the best type of risk management in place, using our experience and general knowledge.”

The need for improvisation and creativity on the job keeps things fresh for the Occupational Safety & Health staff. Quigley added, “What I enjoy about the work the most is that you’re never dealing with the same issues. ... It varies day to day, and it challenges you every day.”

For Patuxent River Occupational Safety & Health specialists, working on an installation where the well being of its personnel comes first makes the challenge worthwhile.

“People care tremendously about safety here,” Quigley explained. “It always pushes you to do your best for them, because they’re not going to accept anything less.”



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