

New radio system improves tank safety

It goes without saying that building better submarines is one of Electric Boat's top priorities.

So is ensuring that each employee leaves work each day unharmed.

To that end, EB has acquired the Lifeline Monitoring System, a two-way radio network that enhances the tank watch program for employees working in confined spaces by making it easier for them to summon emergency services.

Marine chemist Donald Raffo, who runs EB's Confined Spaces Safety Program in Groton, Quonset Point and off-sites, said the manufacturer of the Lifeline radios approached EB two and a half years ago about using the system. After getting the necessary approvals to try it out, the system was established on a test basis at Quonset, and later in Groton.

The test period at Quonset was so successful, he said, that it never ended. The installation there became permanent as soon as EB purchased the system, including 100 radios, 10 air-quality testing devices and two central monitoring stations for both facilities.

But the permanent system has only recently been implemented in Groton, Raffo said, in part because the Casualty Control (CasCon) office was being moved into the Security Vault, and because the physical layout of the Groton facility necessitated a more detailed setup.

"We had different concerns down here because our hull configurations are different than in Quonset," he said. "We were concerned about transmitting when the boat's in the water, in the graving docks, when it's all together." With many of those issues worked out,



Pipefitter Erich Simonds (243), right, and Metal Trades Council safety officer Robert Rosso examine one of 100 new two-way radios EB has purchased as part of the Lifeline Monitoring System, which will enhance the safety of employees working in confined spaces or otherwise isolated areas.

70 training classes were held in April to acquaint employees with the radios, which, similar to the standard tank watch, check on a user's well-being by "asking" if he or she is OK. The radios do this by prompting the user to push a button every 20 minutes. If the user doesn't respond, a CasCon monitor attempts voice contact, at which time the employee can say whether anything is wrong. If an employee doesn't respond to a voice message, CasCon will call the EB Fire Department. And CasCon will know where to send help because as each radio is signed out at the beginning of a shift, the Lifeline system is told where the employee will be working. The radios also have an

emergency button that can be activated immediately by the user.

Chick McCombs, chairman of the Metal Trades Council Safety Committee, said he is encouraging MTC members to give the radios a try, particularly so any remaining problems can be worked out.

"I want them to use it and I want them to get comfortable with it," he said, adding the radios, coupled with EB's existing tank watch system in Groton, will give the company the best con-

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lined space safety program in the nation.

One person who said he plans to use the new radios is pipefitter Erich Simonds.

“Any kind of help you can get to make the tanks safer is valuable,” he said, explaining that an employee on tank watch can’t always see or hear the person he is looking out for, due to either the layout of the tank or extreme noise levels.

Raffo said the MTC was involved in the Lifeline program from early on, and has been supportive of it. However, some employees have expressed unfounded concerns that the radios will allow the monitoring of their whereabouts.

“The bottom line is, it’s not a productivity monitoring tool and it cannot track your movements. It’s a safety tool resource which provides an additional level of safety for tank entrants,” said Raffo, adding the use of the radios is voluntary but may become mandatory in the near future.



More than 100 prospective employees attended a recent job fair at the Quonset Point Facility, with 73 of them filling out application forms. According to job fair organizers, the turnout exceeded expectations. A local radio station broadcasting from the event contributed to its success.

Employees cited for Tech Lecture participation

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New Business Funds: Mark Bennett, Roger Sexauer, Ed Behney, Anita Kaiser.

Automated Steel Processing Center: John Holmänder, Joseph Hadfield, Robert Santos, Roger Ball.

Off-Site Operations Team & Northeast Regional Maintenance: Fred Haberlandt.

Deckplate Engineering Experiences:

Alan Ruditzky, Michael Brooks, Jeff Sullivan, Mike Sweeney.

General Dynamics Business Update: Mike Toner, Hank Rianhard, Steve Ruzzo, John Socha.

In addition, commemorative pins were presented to Facilities personnel who helped with the setup and logistics of the lectures. Recognized were: Sandy Gray, Donald Kaschel, Brian Kondratowicz, Lisa Rocket, Chris Kindel, Mike Street, Brent Cugini, Ken Guarneri.

Retirees

Dept.
242 Gilbert L. Macamaux
21 years
Driller

274 Fred J. Mauro Jr
20 years
Area Superintendent

405 Stephen M. Novic
17 years
Sr Engineering Asst

Dept.
412 Leon C. Knudsen
22 years
Staff Engineer

433 Julianne C. King
34 years
A/A Admin Aide

435 John C. Barber
28 years
Engineering Asst, Project

Dept.
445 Charles R. Hall
19 years
Sr Program Coord

458 Mary E. Brown
14 years
A/A Admin Aide

495 James R. Neidhardt
20 years
Sr Logistics Analyst