



Paddles Safety Bulletin



AN ITERIM SAFETY BULLETIN ADDRESSING CRITICAL SAFETY ISSUES IN THE CARRIER AVIATION COMMUNITY

Paddles Saves the Day Again....

While some may question whether LSOs are actually saving lives on a regular basis out on the platform, the paddles cadre from CVW-5 went a long way to erase any doubt during a day recovery last week. Here is a summary of the incident from the CVN-73 Air Boss, CDR Keith Henry:

During a Case I recovery, an F/A-18E was in the approach turn when the Cross Deck Pendant (CDP) wire caught by the previous aircraft dropped into the catapult track slot during the retract. The hook runner released the CDP from the track slot and signaled the deck edge operator to fully retract the wire to the battery position for the next aircraft (the F/A-18E in the approach turn). Once the landing area was clear, the Arresting Gear Officer (AGO) and Gear Puller exchanged hand signals that the deck was clear. This allowed the Landing Signal Officers to transition from the 100 foot to the 10 foot window. This transition occurred just as the next aircraft approached the 100 foot wave off window. Just as the AGO was prepared to switch the deck status light to green, the AGO saw the Safety Deck Checker and Deck Checker unexpectedly entering the landing area. The AGO and the Landing Signal Officers simultaneously noticed the situation and the LSOs were able to wave off the incoming aircraft.

Note the screen shot below, captured approximately 1.5 seconds after the LSOs hit the wave off lights:



Despite the fact that an incoming Super Hornet was only a few short seconds from touching down, both of the two flight deck crewman continued into the landing area to inspect the CDP. PLAT footage shows the aircraft's hook point just barely missing the two crewman. Eyewitnesses estimated the clearance to be no more than five to six feet.

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Paddles Saves the Day Again.... (Continued)

From the CVN-73 Air Department, the following three problems were identified:

1. The Topside Petty Officer Failed to communicate intentions to Primary.
2. The Arresting Gear Topside Petty Officer and the Deck Checkers failed to signal their intentions to enter the Landing Area to the Arresting Gear Officer.
3. Neither the Safety Deck Checker nor the Deck Checker looked aft for approaching aircraft prior to entering the landing area or while standing in the landing area.

While the AGO did an outstanding job in announcing “Foul Deck, Foul Deck” over the Hydra and releasing the switch that allows the deck lights to go green, the LSOs initiated an immediate wave off because the LSO calling the deck immediately saw the crewmen run into the Landing Area and yelled to the Controlling, Backup, and CAG LSOs that the deck had gone foul inside the 100 foot wave off window.

Here are some learning points submitted by LT “JAKL” Lindsey, the CAG LSO on the platform during this recovery:

1. Anytime anyone or anything enters the LA and an airplane is in the groove, yelling WAVEOFF is paramount. We’ll figure out what happened later.
2. Everyone is trying to kill themselves. Make sure the deck caller devotes 100% attention to the foul lines, both port and starboard.
3. Anticipate ‘green shirts’ running out into the LA to inspect wires for hook-skips, ticks, and wires being caught in the cat track. Knowing what they might do before they do it could buy a precious few seconds.
4. Even though the big flashing red lights should be enough to get power on the airplane, primary could also drop the MOVLAS stick down to drive home the point.

Some important points to review as LSOs:

1. This supports the extreme importance of properly calling the deck. When an LSO is assigned to the position of Deck Caller, they are explicitly responsible for ensuring that the entire platform has no doubt concerning the deck status.
2. While the AGO technically ‘owns’ the starboard foul line, the Deck Caller should actively keep any deck crew activity in their scan, especially after the deck goes clear or is in the 10 foot window.
3. Foul deck wave offs inside the wave off window are not controversial (i.e. LSOs should always wave off an aircraft when the deck goes foul, even if the aircraft touching down is a forgone conclusion).

When it all comes down to it, an LSO’s two primary jobs are keeping people off the ramp and making sure nobody lands on a fouled deck. The Deck Caller is the last line of defense - and in some instances the only line of defense - for the latter. From the perspective of the CAG LSO, the first indication that something was amiss was when the Deck Caller began yelling “FOUL DECK, FOUL DECK, WAVE OFF!!!!” The CAG LSO, following proper procedure, clicks the wave off lights without hesitation and as he pivots to his left to watch the aircraft fly past, he is shocked to see two ‘green shirts’ standing in the LA, seemingly oblivious to the situation. Make no mistake, two deck crewman’s lives were saved because the paddles cadre in CVW-5 practices proper deck calling procedures.

Our measure of success is whether we can say no to the following two questions: ‘Did anyone hit the ramp?’ and ‘Did anyone land on a fouled deck?’ Never underestimate the importance of the LSO calling the deck. They are going to save someone’s life.

Think a Barricade Cannot Happen Again???

Sure, we have not caught an aircraft via the barricade in more than thirteen years. Is it something we should still train for? Is the barricade even a required piece of equipment on fleet CVNs anymore? Believe it or not, these questions have actually been asked in the recent past.

Maybe a recent HAZREP from VFA-32 should be taken into consideration. Earlier this summer during a CVW-3 CQ detachment, a VFA-32 *Swordsmen* aircraft experienced an un-commanded tail hook extension on the catapult shot. The tail hook impacted the shuttle and damaged both the shuttle and the hook point, making a CV landing impossible. Due to the fact that the ship was operating just off the coast, the aircraft diverted uneventfully.

However, what if this had happened during actual blue water operations and a long distance divert was out of the question? Unless the decision is made for a controlled ejection then the only other option is a barricade recovery.

Anytime the hook point comes into contact with anything other than non-skid, the aircraft is prohibited from taking an arrestment. Remember the incident of the F-14 who attempted to trap normally on the next pass after a hook-slap? The hook point sheared off and the jet nearly settled into the water off the end of the landing area.

An actual barricade might be a bigger possibility than you might think.....

