CorrDefense DoD News about Preserving Military Assets

Volume 2, Number 1
Spring 2006
Top Stories

Portrait of Rich Hays: DoD Corrosion Team Leader

Hays Leads Communications and Outreach Team for DoD Corrosion Office

By Cynthia Greenwood

To the engineers who manage corrosion projects for the Department of Defense (DoD), improving communications across diverse military branches may seem daunting and ill-suited for a technical expert. But as an experienced project manager for the Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC), Carderock Division, Rich Hays is accustomed to challenges that don't overlap with his work on the Trident Class submarine or the Marine Corps Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle.

In 2003 Hays was chosen to lead the Communications and Outreach team for the DoD Corrosion Office. The team, known as a WIPT—or "working integrated product team" in DoD parlance—spearheads the Corrosion Office's communication-related policy goals.

How does a veteran Navy corrosion engineer get selected for such a post?

"I kind of fell into it," he recalled. "During the Corrosion Forum meetings that kicked off the corrosion initiative across the Services, maybe I just talked a lot. I guess my willingness to talk was perceived by the others as a strength for the Communications WIPT lead." One of the primary goals of the Communications and Outreach WIPT is to collect and disseminate corrosion mitigation information efficiently and broadly through as many channels as possible. The team also aims to foster better information exchange about corrosion control throughout the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, NASA, industry, and academia.

Hays' role as communications WIPT lead is vital, he feels, in order to help all DoD corrosion specialists to understand common concerns and come together on projects.

At first blush, Hays' work managing large-scale corrosion projects appears unrelated to the work of managing a DoD policy committee seeking better communication among experts. But both jobs present similar challenges. And both require planning, implementation, and getting multiple parties to act toward a common goal.

The Navy bureaucracy is composed of disparate camps, not unlike those that make up the entire DoD, Hays pointed out. "The Navy's key divisions between the air and sea—which are further divided into discrete research and engineering functions within each sector—can be fractured and inefficient," he said. Hays' role as communications WIPT lead is vital, he feels, in order to help all DoD corrosion specialists to understand common concerns and come together on projects. "I enjoy it. It's an important job so I'm willing to do whatever I can to keep it moving forward."

Since 1980 Hays has managed and implemented projects in the Corrosion Research and Engineering Branch and other branches of NSWC's Carderock Division. Currently, he manages 16 scientists and engineers in the field of corrosion and coatings technology. He helped the Marine Corps Systems Command establish the Marine Corps Corrosion Control Center of Excellence. Previously, he led programs to resolve cracking problems on Trident Class submarine propellers

and to reduce total ownership costs of Marine Corps vehicles and has done extensive work on corrosion control for surface ship and submarine piping systems. He also developed corrosion-control methodologies for the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle.

As a "recovering" Little League coach who has persisted through a decade of softball, soccer, and basketball seasons with two daughters, Hays understands the importance of patience and dogged determination. Fostering good communications within a multi-faceted bureaucracy requires the same qualities. "Communication and Outreach is a continuous effort," he said. "I am fortunate to work with a dedicated and motivated group of people on the Communications and Outreach WIPT. It is easy to keep this group focused and on track."