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Top Stories

## Team Leader Pivotal in Improving DoD Material Quality

By Ben Craig

Only mechanics and engineers who work on Coast Guard aircraft understand how difficult it is for Navy personnel to keep an aircraft in top condition, especially when salt water and its vapor constantly threaten to corrode the skin and critical systems. To achieve high standards for aircraft materials, the Navy has established various requirements for any new material being considered for use on their aircraft.

To ensure they pass muster, Steve Spadafora has dedicated himself to the task of qualifying Navy materials. As Division Head for Materials Engineering at the Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) in Patuxent River, MD, Spadafora is the cognizant signature authority for qualifying new Corrosion Prevention and Control (CPC) materials to be applied to Navy and Marine Corps aircraft.

To be qualified before use on naval aircraft, materials must be proven effective and reliable against corrosion in a harsh aircraft carrier environment. After going through a comprehensive evaluation process, data for CPC materials are put through a final evaluation by Spadafora. Spadafora's responsibilities for qualifying materials for use on DoD systems extend to the national level. For the past four years, he has served as the lead for the Specifications, Standards, and Qualification Processes Working Integrated Product Team (SSQP WIPT) for the Corrosion Prevention and Control IPT, part of a major DoD effort to drastically reduce the impact of corrosion on military assets.

Spadafora has 29 years of experience working with specs and standards for CPC materials, spanning his entire career at NAVAIR. When the DoD Office of Corrosion Policy and Oversight needed someone to lead the SSQP WIPT, Spadafora recalled, "it was an easy fit."

During his tenure as the lead for the SSQP WIPT, he helped the group to near-completion of phase two of a major three-phase project. "We began the project by locating 16,000 corrosion-related specifications and standards," he said. "We reviewed them and then cut them down to 1600. At this point we re-reviewed and categorized the remaining specs and standards and finally ended up with 861 corrosion product specifications."

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Spadafora emphasized that all 861 specs and standards are in one spot on the DoD Corrosion Exchange Web site and accessible to everyone. "By accomplishing this phase of the SSQP plan, everyone from the Coast Guard technician to an airman will have the same answer when asked to evaluate a new material. This will share information on good materials and products among all of the Services, and will help to eliminate the non-effective ones."



The organized specifications and standards matrix and product introduction process will free up time for Spadafora to focus on the materials and process needs of Naval and Marine Corps Aviation. "Right now we expend a lot of time researching and evaluating products or explaining why we shouldn't buy a specific product, and this specs and standards process will facilitate this in the future." Rather than searching several databases, there is now a single entry point, which simplifies the process, and also allows each service to provide a consistent answer and minimize the effort DoD takes to evaluate new products.

After four years of providing strong service and leadership to the Specs and Standards WIPT, Spadafora has taken on a new role at NAVAIR. He recently passed the mantle of leadership to Robert Herron of the U.S. Army's Aviation and Missile Command (AMCOM). He continues to serve the Specs and Standards WIPT in a consulting role. In his leisure time he also likes to spend as much time as possible with his family, and he especially enjoys watching his daughters' soccer games.