

Keeping a *cool* perspective when challenges **heat** up

Jo Adail Stephenson | DCMA Public Affairs

Several warfighters, their breaths easily seen in the bone-chilling cold, quickly step inside to enveloping warmth.

Thousands of miles away, the heat is visible as it rises off the ground in shimmering waves, but inside the air conditioning keeps the warfighters cool and comfortable.

Beneath the drive to provide a temperature-controlled environment for warfighters stands Jennifer Sheriff, Defense Contract Management Agency Dayton quality assurance specialist.

“I want their air conditioners to keep them cool and their heaters to keep them warm,” Sheriff said. Her sentiments about supporting warfighters run deep. “The feeling about the military is so strong because I was a military spouse,” she said.

Sheriff said she wants warfighters to



During final inspection, Defense Contract Management Agency Dayton quality assurance specialist Jennifer Sheriff checks to ensure the proper assembly and functionality of a M26 joint service transportable decontamination system — small scale. (Photos by Jo Adail Stephenson, DCMA Public Affairs)

Jennifer Sheriff, DCMA Dayton quality assurance specialist, inspects the interior panel assembly of a multi-temperature refrigerated container system, or MTRCS, for alignment and bowing issues. The MTRCS is an insulated container used to store and transport temperature-sensitive cargo and perishable food items in theater.

know “We (DCMA employees) are here every day. It’s our work. It’s so much more than just my job. We want to make sure they get the proper equipment. This is what we’re here for.”

MENTOR

Sheriff is a career QAS who uses her own experiences as former intern to mentor others.

Her career began in 1997 as a procurement technician with Defense Contract Management Command Northern Europe. In 2000, she was accepted into a quality assurance position stateside as part of the agency’s three-year Keystone Intern Program. These days she mentors interns who are sent to work with her.

“Best advice I’ve been given – you don’t have to have all the answers. You just need to know where to go to get the answers. I tell current interns the same thing,”

she said.

Over the years, Sheriff has embraced her changing roles from serving as an intern to now being a mentor. “When a recent intern came onboard, I worked with him to get his career going – how to do inspections and audits. I’ve come full circle from the QAs who first helped me, now I can help other people.”

She said working with a contractor who was having problems early in her career really helped her to learn and gain experience. “I tell interns to get as much experience as they can and to not be afraid to tackle the problems – you’re going to learn that way,” Sheriff said.

WORKING WITH THE CONTRACTOR

She is the resident QAS at a contractor facility where she performs process reviews, full acceptance and hands-on inspections on the environmental control systems and decontamination

systems operating in environments where warfighters are stationed around the world.

Sheriff is not only a resident QAS but also a non-resident QAS covering more than 10 contractors with the majority located in northern Kentucky.

When working at other contractor sites, she has to understand each contractor’s system so she can use that knowledge with physical inspection and with documentation to ensure the product meets contractual requirements. “Different forms, different processes, everywhere I go it’s different,” she said. “Every day is an adventure.”

Sheriff is most proud of her role in helping to change the attitude of contractors working with government inspectors. “It used to be adversarial – the way QASs and contractors interacted,” Sheriff said. “I’m helping to transform that into working relationships.”

TEAMWORK

Jimmy Metcalf, team leader, and Jeff Burgjohann, senior resident industrial specialist, work with Sheriff at a contractor facility.

“I do the oversight to make sure Jennifer has the support she needs, the training she has to have,” Metcalf said.

Sheriff works with Burgjohann when they find a problem which affects current production. “We let Jeff know it may cause a delay, so he can inform the buying activity,” she said.

Burgjohann monitors the schedules and tracks the material for shipment. He also handles progress payments in instances where the contract stipulates a contractor can do specific work and then can submit paperwork for payment and continue with the contract.

“My job is to make sure we make our delivery dates and schedules,” said Burgjohann, who has been with the agency since 1988 and has a total of 28 years of federal service. “I help Jennifer when she has problems. It’s great to have somebody to work with. We’re very team-oriented.”



Jeff Burgjohann, Defense Contract Management Agency Dayton senior resident industrial specialist, tracks material for shipment and monitors the delivery schedules at a contractor facility.