Commander's Call Topics

Oct. 4, 2012

"These issues all relate to how the Air Force takes care of its Airmen and their families. Without the participants' input, we can't achieve the forum's ultimate goal -- making the Air Force better." -- Carl Buchanan, forum leader during the 2012 Caring for People Forum at Joint Base Andrews, Md.

►CURRENT ISSUES

Roth contributions open to all active-duty service members
Beginning Oct. 1, active-duty members of the Air Force, Army and Navy will be able to contribute to the Roth Thrift Savings Plan as part of their investment planning, Defense Financing and Accounting Service officials said Sept. 28.

OSI introduces new smartphone anonymous tip line
The Air Force Office of Special Investigations has opened its first anonymous tip line that allows submissions from the Internet, via SMS (texting) or using a smartphone application.

Discovery Channel series highlights C-17
The show "Mighty Planes" took aim at a new plane, the C-17 Globemaster III, and the Discovery Channel was here to film the versatile cargo plane from Sept. 20 to Sept. 26.

► PERSONNEL ISSUES

Retroactive Stop Loss application deadline nears
Airmen eligible for the Retroactive Stop Loss Special Pay Program have until Oct. 21 to apply, Air Force Personnel Center officials said.

►FAMILY, HEALTH AND SAFETY

Electronic payments required for TRICARE Reserve Select and Retired Reserve monthly premiums
To avoid losing coverage, beneficiaries enrolled in TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) or TRICARE Retired Reserve (TRR) who pay monthly premiums by check need to switch to an electronic form of payment before Jan. 1, 2013.

► ENVIRONMENT, SPACE, TECHNOLOGY

AF leaders encourage energy savings in latest 'Letter to Airmen'
Secretary of the Air Force Michael B. Donley, Chief of Staff of the Air Force General Mark A. Welsh III and Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force James A. Roy issued a tri-signature "Letter to Airmen" on Sept. 28.

Personal Cyber Security in an Age of TMI

Unlike many who work in the private sector, those of us who work for the Air Force are assured that our work computers' cyber security is as up-to-date as possible.

But what about our home computers? Enter: Cyber Space, a website publicizing cyber security information and tips to assure that personal computers are as secure as those at the office. Provided by the 24th Air Force and other government entities, Cyber Space is intended as a "one-stop shop" of useful and educational links, stories and materials for both Air Force members and the public. All content is unclassified, and it can be shared with family and friends.

According to the 24th Air Force, cyber threats are just as real at home, maybe more so. Adversaries realize that targets are typically more vulnerable when operating from their home network. Home users need to maintain a basic level of network defense and hygiene for both themselves and their families when accessing the internet.

The following best practices are just some of those contained on Cyber Space:
1. Free wi-fi hotspots at coffee shops, airports and malls, are often susceptible to cyber attacks. When traveling with personal mobile devices, connect to the internet instead of wireless hotspots.
2. Exchanging home and work content can be risky. The forwarding of content from home systems to work systems either via email or removable media may put work systems at an increased risk of compromise.
3. Storing personal information on the internet decreases your control of it. Webmail, financial information and personal information posted to social networking sites or stored in the cloud, is difficult to remove and is governed by the host's privacy policies. Before posting any information, ask yourself: "Who will have access to this information?"
4. Be aware of what and how much personal information is being shared on social networking sites and who has access to it to avoid being targeted by unscrupulous searchers. Periodically review the security policies and settings available from your social network provider.
Enable the use of SSL, or Application encryption. This protects the confidentiality of information while in transit. Most web browsers indicate that SSL is enabled with a lock symbol either next to the web page URL or within the status bar.
5. Use email best practices to reduce email-based threats. For example: Use different email address for work and home. Don't use out-of-office messages on personal email. Always use secure email protocols when accessing email, particularly if using a wireless network. Unsolicited emails containing attachments are best deleted without opening. Password management is key to safety online. Use strong passwords—at least 10 characters long containing multiple character types—and a different one for each account.
6. Use Photo/GPS Integration carefully. It provides profilers with near- real-time notification of your location when uploaded. Best practice: strip out such information altogether.

Cyber Space, offers easy access to a variety of ways to practice internet safety at home, keeping you and your information secure.

►THIS WEEK IN AIR FORCE HISTORY

Oct. 4, 1949 – C-82s dropped an entire field artillery battery by parachute at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Oct. 5, 1905 – At Dayton, Ohio, Orville Wright flew the Wright III, the first practical airplane, to a world distance and duration record of 24.2 miles in 38 minutes, three seconds.

Oct. 6, 1975 – During Project Coin, C-130s delivered 7,597 tons of critical supplies and over two million gallons of petroleum products to Alaska at Point Barrow, Lonely, Okiktok and Barter Island lasting through Dec. 2. Contract aircraft flew another 453.8 tons of oversize steel pipe from Elmendorf AFB to Lonely and 2,981.5 tons of supplies from Lonely to Point Barrow.

Oct. 7, 1996 – At Whiteman AFB, Mo., two 509th Bomb Wing pilots, Capt. Tony Moretti and Maj. Chris Inman flew a 34-hour-long endurance flight in the B-2 Spirit simulator.

Oct. 8, 1993 - Operation Provide Promise, the airlift of humanitarian relief supplies to Bosnia, surpasses in duration (but not in tonnage or missions) the Berlin Airlift, becoming the longest sustained relief operation in U.S. Air Force history.

Oct. 9, 1999 - The final SR-71 Blackbird flight occurred during the Edwards AFB, Calif., Open House and Air Show. NASA Dryden Flight Research Center pilot Rogers Smith and flight engineer Marta Bohn-Meyer flew the aircraft to Mach 3.21 at 80,100 feet.

Oct. 10, 1950 - The U.S. Air Force activated the first Air National Guard units to support the Korean War. The U.S. eventually mobilized 66 flying units and 45,000 guardsmen into federal service. An H-5 crew from the 3rd Air Reserve Squadron administered blood plasma to a rescued pilot for the first time while a helicopter was in flight. The crewmembers received the Silver Star for this action.

Oct. 11, 1968 - Apollo VII, the first manned mission in the lunar landing program launched from Kennedy Space Center Complex 34 on a Saturn IV booster. The crew, which included Air Force Maj. Don F. Eisele, splashed down Oct. 22 after completing 163 revolutions of the earth.

For more information on Air Force heritage, visit http://www.airforcehistory.af.mil.

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National Fire Prevention Week (NFPW), Oct. 7-13 this year, isn't just about the tried-and-true safety rules that are grounded in common sense such as: Don't leave food cooking on the stove unattended; Don't overload electrical outlets; Know at least two escape routes from your home, office and school in case of fire. NFPW is also about lifestyle innovations that present a real hazard if not properly used.

The CFL light bulb that reduces the use and end-cost of electricity can be a fire hazard if not manufactured according to strict guidelines set by testing and standards organizations like Underwriters' Laboratories or Energy Star. The Consumer Product Safety Commission has a list of CFL bulbs that are fire hazards.

Microwave ovens provide rapid food prep, but they also heat food unevenly and require special microwave-safe dishes. If a microwave oven fire breaks out, keep the door closed, turn off the microwave and unplug it from the wall. If the fire does not go out, leave the building and call the fire department.

Gel fuel, a relatively new take on man's most notable discovery, has come under serious scrutiny in recent years, resulting in nine manufacturers and distributers voluntarily recalling their products. Refilling of a not-yet-cooled heat source is a major fire hazard. Also, gel viscosity varies by manufacturer and is greatly affected by temperature changes. These factors cause fluctuating fuel pour rates and result in overflow and spillage. Gel fuel sticks to skin and clothing, does not evaporate, and is likely to catch fire.

Fire prevention and safety is a combination of common sense and healthy respect for any fire source. As those early Iron Age people knew: It's an awesome tool in the right circumstances. What they didn't know—and we can learn—are the right circumstances.