

Adding value to the manufacturing enterprise

Jo Adail Stephenson | DCMA Public Affairs

Gary Haton wields his manufacturing knowledge and skills as effectively

as those who weld the

aircraft engine parts he inspects as a Defense Contract Management Agency Indianapolis quality assurance specialist.

The welds are as essential as the work Haton performs to ensure the parts meet the customer's rigorous specifications and standards.

"I check every single weld and critical characteristic on the parts. Pilots can't pull over to the side of the road and call for assistance," Haton said. "If I have helped to save even just one of our warfighters' lives during my federal career, then I've accomplished my ultimate goal."

His work is complicated, complex and tedious whether he's physically looking at the final welds, inspecting a part and checking its features with blueprints/drawings, or verifying measurements using a series of gauges and wires to see if the part meets the required specifications.

Haton's skills are part of the added value the agency brings to its customers, warfighters and the manufacturing process, according to Army Lt. Col. Todd Spencer, DCMA Indianapolis commander. DCMA is involved with product examination and reviews to make sure the contractor is using sufficient, standard and effective procedures.

"That's how DCMA adds the value to the overall manufacturing process," Spencer said.

Haton reviews the contractor's procedures – from how they do their testing to verifying the calibration of the parts – most of which have to be pre-approved through the buying activity or customer.

Gary Haton, Defense Contract Management Agency Indianapolis quality assurance specialist, verifies the records on an aircraft engine part. (Photos by Jo Adail Stephenson, DCMA Public Affairs)





Gary Haton (left), Defense Contract Management Agency Indianapolis quality assurance specialist, demonstrates to Army Lt. Col. Todd Spencer, DCMA Indianapolis commander, how he checks the slot width of an aircraft engine part using go, no-go gauge pins.

“They’ll put together a plan and a process to be presented to the buying activity – that’s how they’re saying they’re going to make the product,” Haton said. “If they deviate from it, then the product is not acceptable without the approval from the buying activity.”

With small business suppliers, Spencer said, “We take an interactive teaming approach so they understand the problems and understand the requirements.”

Rodger Clark, DCMA Indianapolis lead quality assurance specialist for the team, said Haton keeps him and the chain of command informed of issues as needed.

“He loves the hands-on part of the job and being in the manufacturing environment where his previous experience is a real plus to our organization,” Clark said. “He loves to

share his knowledge with the newer employees to assist in their professional development.”

Manufacturing is second nature to Haton, who has been around it for more than 30 years after beginning his federal service career as a machinist in 1982 for the Air Force. A DCMA employee for three years, he is a non-resident quality assurance specialist (mechanical) working with 18 different assigned contractors and covering a 12,000-square-mile area.

At this facility, Haton monitors all phases of the process including the incoming raw materials (approved vendors, material certifications, etc.), forming, welding, heat treating, non-destructive testing (liquid penetrant and radiography testing), calibration systems, inspection systems, packaging

and the approved part markings for the necessary traceability required for aircraft components.

“The goal is zero defects on items being sent to the field to provide our (warfighters) with the best product available in accordance with the contract requirements and technical data,” Haton said. DCMA performs audits on all the systems and conducts 100 percent product examinations on all parts because these are critical safety items.

Testing the product is just as important as manufacturing it. “Welds are critically important for these aircraft engine parts,” he said. The contractor conducts non-destructive testing to check for any cracks, which are visible under a black light. Issues such as cracks or voids in welds – indications have to be re-evaluated to



Defense Contract Management Agency Indianapolis Quality Assurance Specialist Gary Haton checks the outside diameter dimension of an aircraft engine part. (Photos by Jo Adail Stephenson, DCMA Public Affairs)

The documentation stays with the aircraft engine part from “cradle to grave” as part of its traceability until the part is no longer in use.


Haton sometimes works with contractors and end-users on parts still in use. During the investigation of a non-valid product quality deficiency report at a contractor facility, it was discovered the seven-year-old parts sent to the user had been manufactured correctly, but the user was unaware a hole must be finish-drilled to make the final assembly possible, Haton said.

“This operation wasn’t spelled out as an alternate manufacturing method in the technical manual, so I contacted the engineering support activity for that item,”

he said. “The procedure was incorporated with an addition to the manual. The parts were returned for use.”

He expressed his appreciation for warfighters and the sacrifices they make. “I work for our (warfighters) to get them the best possible product I can in accordance with the contract and technical requirements.”

Haton’s thoroughness ensures the parts meet both customer and warfighter expectation.

“When the supplier is successful, the government is successful. When the government is successful, the warfighter is successful. That’s the bottom line,” Spencer said. 

determine the problem and then correct it.

“The contractor quality manager inspects it before I even look at it,” Haton said. “They don’t try to present me with anything that isn’t ready to inspect.” He then checks their rework procedures and reviews how it corresponds with all the paperwork.

“First thing I do is verify the paperwork is correct and complete before I look at anything,” said Haton, a self-described “fanatic” about validating paperwork. “Everything has to be documented.”



Defense Contract Management Agency Indianapolis employees Rodger Clark, (left) lead quality assurance specialist for the team, and Gary Haton, quality assurance specialist, review the drawings on an aircraft engine part.