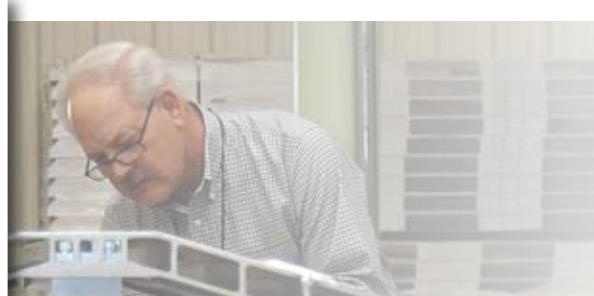


Ensuring containers withstand ‘ship-shock’

Quality assurance specialist key to missiles reaching its destination

Matthew Montgomery | DCMA Public Affairs



While missiles are an important item in the inventory of the U.S.

Navy, the significance of the containers used to ship and keep these weapons safely tucked away are often overlooked. This is a detail, however, not lost on Bruce Jablonski.

He ensures the shipping and storage container which houses one of the Navy's main precision strike weapon systems, is manufactured to specifications and able to withstand ship-shock — the impact taken by a vessel during an explosion. “This is an extremely sophisticated, very expensive munition used across the services,” said Jablonski, Defense Contract Management Agency Denver quality assurance specialist. “If it can't be transported efficiently, and moved and stored safely, then we're in big trouble.”

The lethality of the weapon means storage containers must adequately protect sailors in the event ships are hit by the enemy. As the responsible person for the inspection and validation of processes which produce the container, Jablonski said agency involvement is paramount.

“From a DCMA perspective, I'm the quality assurance specialist responsible for performing sampling inspections and executing the government QA plan — which the agency is responsible for creating,” said Jablonski.

The company building the container manufactures about 370 yearly. Jablonski has been acting as the QAS for the program since the initial contract was awarded.

“The company was involved from the ground up on this container. They actually came up with the design,” said Jablonski. “They built it and it was independently destructive tested for meeting Navy

Bruce Jablonski, Defense Contract Management Agency Denver quality assurance specialist, inspects the shipping container which houses one of the Navy's main precision strike weapon systems. Jablonski said for every shipment, a final acceptance inspection is conducted where he goes through not only the dimensional requirements and markings, but also the associated hardware. (Photos by Matthew Montgomery, DCMA Public Affairs)

munitions requirements.”

Due to the technical nature of producing the container, the company, being a small contractor, and this being the company’s first government contract, Jablonski spent a lot of time in the contractor facility in the early stages.

“Bruce has been working with us since the beginning, and his job hasn’t been easy,” said the company’s program manager. “We have more than 95 parts coming from more than 30 suppliers — a stack of paperwork he had to review over multiple days. And, that was just to get us qualified for our First Article Inspection so we could move forward.”


Jablonski’s involvement has not slowed down much. Reviewing the initial supplier paperwork has been replaced with periodic process reviews and quality assurance system audits. “These inspections allow us to assess the company’s ability to continue

to provide containers at minimum risk that are fully compliant for the government,” said Jablonski.

“This could include making sure training and certifications are up-to-date,” continued Jablonski. “For example, there might be requirements to have a level two qualified welder to do the process — we verify and validate it is in fact taking place. We also validate their quality plans and how they manufacture the product. We go through each step and look for objective evidence that each step is being followed and repeatedly carried out as the contract requires.”

Before shipment, a final check takes place. “For every shipment, we conduct a final acceptance inspection where we go through not only the dimensional requirements and markings, but also the associated hardware and the total 22 items required per the contract,” said Jablonski.

These inspections are usually conducted at the end of the month when the company is preparing containers for shipment. Jablonski must visually inspect all the containers and then randomly select five to fully inspect.

“This is one of the more unique and challenging programs I’ve worked on since coming on board with DCMA,” said Jablonski. “We always think about the fire power and defensive capabilities of the Navy’s missile and weapons programs, but most people don’t realize how those weapons get from point A to point B. It’s very rewarding being able to be a part of that process.” 



Bruce Jablonski (standing), Defense Contract Management Agency Denver quality assurance specialist, reviews technical data during a process review with the container company’s program manager.



Bruce Jablonski (left), Defense Contract Management Agency Denver quality assurance specialist, verifies measurements as the company’s program manager reads the dimensions of the shipping and storage container.