

Operations Secure as Service Reductions Move Forward

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With the implementation of service reductions in fiscal year 2013, cost cutting measures have been taken throughout Naval District Washington (NDW). These changes, primarily related to custodial and grounds keeping services, are expected to affect programs such as operations, as well. However, regional leadership is steadfast in maintaining mission readiness regardless of the changes.



“We are trying to protect mission readiness as much as possible,” said NDW Executive Director Thomas McGuire. “So where you’ll see most of the reductions are in things which affect convenience. I don’t see mission readiness being significantly degraded, because that’s precisely what we’re trying to protect.”

The changes come as a result of DoD-wide measures to reduce spending by \$400 billion over the next 10 years. While safety is still essential, Barbara VanDenBerg, NDW regional safety program director, said that this will require elimination of certain safety services.

“We will use risk-based decision making to choose what services we will not provide,” said VanDenBerg. “Our highest priority is providing safety services to comply with federal occupational safety and health laws, followed closely by compliance with high-risk Navy safety programs such as explosives safety.”

VanDenBerg explained that installation safety offices’ workload projections, including both safety services to installation staffs as well as requested safety services from tenant commands, are currently being analyzed to see what services may need to be forgone in order to remain within budget, but still within federal safety laws.

“Types of services we would defer would be recreational and off-duty safety program requirements, ergonomic assessments, and inspections in low-risk workplaces,” said VanDenBerg. “Not all operations will see reductions. Because we are moving towards our Full Time Equivalent cap through voluntary attrition, the operation to be reduced is not necessarily the one we would choose. For example, our explosives safety officers are specially trained and cannot be simply replaced by a general safety and occupational health specialist.”

Security operations have also been affected by the service reductions, though leadership stresses that installations are still secure, despite budgetary pressures. This will result in convenience being affected, but security maintained.

“We’re seeing some increased wait and service time at pass and ID, and we’ve always experienced long lines and wait times at the gates,” said Rob Shaffer, NDW regional security officer. “We’re still seeing that and keeping an eye on it, but as we have to reduce lanes at the gates we expect that backups may get longer, there could be longer wait times to get in through the gates. We recommend that people offset this by staggering their work schedules or possibly arriving on base earlier.”

Shaffer added that some security patrols have been realigned to cut costs, with some moderate increases in efficiency. Shaffer also offered an optimistic view of any inconvenience caused by the changes.

“As you start to compress and levy more requirements on the workforce we’ll start to see a little more stress at the work level, and there might be some unfavorable reaction to longer waits from the public, but we’re dealing with it and we’re trying to offset those situations as best we can,” said Shaffer. “I’m hopeful that this will be a short-term situation, possibly

through the end of the fiscal year, and that next year it should be better.”

This story is part two in a four-part series regarding service reductions in NDW. Next week, The Waterline will be reviewing service reductions impact on Morale, Welfare and Recreation and other N9 services.