NEXCOM Announces New Director of the Navy Clothing Textile Research Facility

Laurra Winters came on board in October as the Navy Exchange Service Command’s (NEXCOM) new Director of its Navy Clothing Textile Research Facility (NCTRF). Winters joins the NCTRF team whose mission is to maximize the quality of life for Navy Sailors through uniform and protective clothing development and sustainment.

NCTRF is comprised of a team of subject matter experts: textile technologists, clothing designers, and engineers. These individuals are involved in conducting research, design, development, improvement and user assessment studies of uniforms, protective garments and equipment. Like clothing designer, Eileen Hamalian, who has been involved with the development and continued evaluation of the U.S. Fleet Forces Command’s two-piece, inherently flame resistant uniform which seeks to provide versatile protection for Sailors aboard ships. Also, Pratibha Sinha, a physical scientist, who oversees the biophysical lab which houses lifelike mannequins and the hydro environmental testing pool. She evaluates Sailors’ biological effects to various weather, water and temperature impacts to guarantee survivability under environmentally adverse conditions.

“I have worked in the Department of Defense for a number of years and the mission of NCTRF is critical to Navy’s readiness and lethality of the force,” said Winters. “The NCTRF team is a key component to bring forward new technologies that provide our service members with the necessary and effective capabilities for mission readiness.”

NCTRF works hand-in-hand with Navy leadership on new uniform initiatives such as updated design and fit based on current body types. Supervisory textile technologist of the Uniforms and Certification Group, Louise Caulfield, led several key Navy projects like the female chokers, and NWU Type I, II and III. She’s currently running the ongoing certification and quality assurance program to provide Sailors with uniform standardization and improved fit.

Caulfield’s team includes Kim Olen, who is managing the female uniform size standardization effort. She has been utilizing the results of the anthropometric correlation study to adjust the size and fit of current uniforms to conform to today’s female Sailors including the redesign of the new female skirts and slacks.

One of the most current Navy initiatives is the study and evaluation of a new general safety boot that provides better comfort and performance that meets operational requirements. Amy Brayshaw, supervisory textile technologist of the Organizational and Protective Clothing Group,
has been studying and conducting in-fleet assessments of improved boot designs. Her work directly contributed to the new I Boot 4 which is currently being sold in NEX uniform stores. Along with the boot program, she developed and tested the Improved Flame Resistant Variant (IFRV) coverall, an approved fleet organizational clothing item.

In addition to the IFRV and the boot study, NCTRF helped to create the optional physical fitness uniform tagged with the new logo, “Forged by the Sea.” Clothing designer, Julie Kontos, was one of the principals on the project, ensuring its quality as well as handling the design and color development and implementing sizing standards and fit comparable to commercial clothing.

NCTRF not only handles Navy projects and programs, but also works closely with the U.S. Marine Corps on its clothing and protective equipment. Barbara Quinn, who handles pattern and prototype design, supports multiple redesigns of U.S. Marine Corps and Navy clothing as well as personal protective equipment. In addition, Winters mentioned that, “Barbara and along with a team of clothing designers, Lynn Anderson, Katherine Verrico and Carlos Custodio have worked on a wide range of items like the Navy’s service dress blues, NWU Type I, II & III, body armor, steam suits, chemical biological suits and a full redesign the USS Constitution uniform.”

“I am excited to be part of NEXCOM and lead a team here at NCTRF who are skilled and ingenious experts, all with the determination to develop new technologies and make uniforms better-suited for our Sailors within their current training and operational environments,” said Winters.

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