Civilian workers complete underway maintenance, depart *GW*

Story and photo by MC3 Juan Pinalez, *USS George Washington* Public Affairs

Puget Sound and Norfolk Naval Shipyard workers began departing *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) (GW), during a brief port visit to Sasebo, Japan, April 5, after conducting routine maintenance during a two-week period while underway.

"We are dropping off 300 shipyard workers because their work here is done," said Ken Koemmpel, the civilian maintenance project superintendent. "About 150 workers will remain to finish miscellaneous jobs, but most projects have been completed."

The shipyard workers have been aboard *GW* since the ship pulled out of her forward operating port of Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Japan, March 21. *GW* got underway to continue routine maintenance due to the complex nature of the natural disaster that struck Japan March 11.

The decision to conduct the maintenance at sea, something many consider a "historic first" for the Navy, proved to be challenging, but the shipyard workers were confident in their ability to get the job done.

"There were approximately 600 individual jobs accomplished in the past few weeks - which equates to about 10,000 man-days, and that's quite a lot of work in a short amount of time," said Koemmpel. "It would normally take us about five weeks in port to get the same job done, and we did it in two weeks at sea with limited resources."

"We worked on the main engines, replaced lagging, upgraded electrical wiring and performed maintenance from bow to stern," said Joel Winborne, Norfolk Naval shipyard painter. "We painted more than I could imagine; we must have gone through three hundred gallons. I've done my job, and now it's time to go home."

While some of the shipyard workers are prior enlisted Sailors, the majority have never been to sea despite their decades of experience as shipbuilders. The two weeks underway aboard *GW* gave some of them a new found respect for the men and women who serve in the Navy.

(Right) David Green, a machinist from Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, teaches MR2 Jason Lunstrum new machining techniques while on board *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) March 23. Puget Sound and Norfolk Naval Shipyard workers began departing *GW* April 5, after conducting routine maintenance during a two-week period while underway.

"I've had a great time being deployed," said Michael Hagstrom, Puget Sound Naval Shipyard ship fitter. "I have a brother that's in the Navy, and I signed up to do a Tiger Cruise with him on the [*USS Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72)] after my work in Japan was to be over. After the disasters stuck Japan, I'm glad to have gone underway with *George Washington* instead. I got the full Navy experience instead of a Tiger 'Fun' Cruise. I've gotten to see what it means to be a Sailor."

For many of the maintenance projects, *GW* Sailors worked side-by-side with their civilian counterparts, coming together as one team. On many of those projects, the craftsmen of Puget Sound and Norfolk Naval Shipyard served as teachers to their younger students.

"I'm responsible for every one of the workers on board, and I really appreciate the support the crew has shown, especially the senior leadership," said Koemmpel. "It's been a unique opportunity to do something that hasn't been done before, and for us to be able to support the crew and the ship in a time of crisis in Japan, really means a lot."

"What this past couple of weeks has shown is that whenever there is a crisis, the shipyard workers can come together and get the job done and on time, no matter what," said William Dewhirst, Puget Sound Naval Shipyard electrician.

April is Alcohol Awareness Month: What is your drinking IQ?

From Military Health System

Do you feel guilty after drinking too much? Do you fail to do what is expected of you because of drinking? Do friends suggest your drinking might be a problem? If you answered yes to any of these questions, alcohol may be negatively impacting your life. It might be time to check things out.

To help you better understand your relationship with alcohol, this April, in observance of Alcohol Awareness Month, Military Pathways is encouraging service members and their families to assess their drinking IQ by taking a brief, anonymous questionnaire either online at www.DrinkingIQ.org, over the phone at 877-877-3547, or at military installations worldwide.

"The alcohol screenings give service members an opportunity to see if their drinking could be posing a problem to their health or safety," said Bill Smith, the Alcohol Abuse Prevention specialist at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, 29 Palms, Calif. "We have been participating in the program since 2008 and I would say half of the people who come through our center for treatment come as a result of this screening program."

Since the Drinking IQ campaign launched, more than 17,000 people have taken an alcohol screening online through the Military Pathways program. Of those who scored positive for symptoms of an alcohol use disorder and answered the question, "Do you plan to seek further evaluation?," more than 25 percent answered, "Yes."

"The goal of this program is to get service members and family members to think about how, when and why they drink. Not everyone who scores positive on the assessment requires treatment, but research shows that screening and brief intervention can be key in getting people to cut back on their alcohol use," said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Hans Ritschard, BSC, PhD, director of Psychological Health Strategic Operations in the Department of Defense Office of Force Health Protection and Readiness.

In addition to the phone and online screenings, military installations will be holding in-person education and awareness events. Educational materials and promotional items that include posters and sports water bottles with the Drinking IQ website printed on them, as well as screening forms are available throughout the year.

For more information, visit the website www.MilitaryPathways.org.

Military Pathways gives military service personnel and their families the opportunity to learn more about mental health and alcohol use through anonymous self-assessments offered online, via telephone, and through events held at installations.

The program is designed to help individuals identify symptoms and access assistance before a problem becomes serious. The self-assessments address alcohol use, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, generalized anxiety disorder and bipolar disorder.

After completing a self-assessment, individuals receive referral information for Tricare, Military OneSource and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The program is run by the nonprofit Screening for Mental Health® and is fully funded by Force Health Protection and Readiness, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Health Affairs. To learn more, visit www.MilitaryPathways.org.