Hakozaki construction project fuels environmental protection

Story by Blake Vives, CFAY Public Affairs

Prevention and forward thinking are often the keys to a successful disaster response plan if it is ever needed. A recent environmentally friendly construction project enhanced the FISC Yokosuka Hakozaki Fuel Terminal's ability to safely and efficiently clean up in the event of an oil spill. As the terminal is located on Azuma Island across from Yokosuka base, its team strives to protect the local environment.

It is standard operating procedure to place floating oil containment booms around vessels during fueling operations to facilitate clean up if a spill occurred. The Defense Energy Support Center (DESC) funded project provided the fuel terminal with an oil containment boom maintenance pad, enabling them to safely clean oil booms after a spill.

FISC Fuel Facilities Engineer Lia Walton, a member of the construction project team, serves as spokeswoman for their collaborative efforts.

"Our maintenance personnel noted that they needed an area to clean the oil booms after they are used during a spill event," said Walton. "Without this project, they would have to carefully wash and clean the oil booms, which can be longer than 300 feet, and keep the contaminated water from reaching the bay."

Workers at the FISC Yokosuka Hakozaki Fuel Terminal on Azuma Island perform routine maintenance on an oil containment boom, used as an oil spill protection measure during fueling operations. The Defense Energy Support Center recently funded a project which provided the fuel terminal with a concrete oil containment boom maintenance pad, enabling them to safely clean oil booms after a marine oil spill without contaminating the environment.

Photo by Tetsu Hiyoshi

The civil engineer approved construction project included installation of a steel-reinforced concrete slab with raised edges for containment. The entire slab slopes towards drains leading to a new oil-water separator adjacent to the new concrete pad. Additional enhancements were made to surrounding structures to ensure containment of fuel as the boom is brought ashore for cleaning. The pad is multi-purposed and can also be used for routine maintenance and repair of an oil spill containment boom, such as replacement of floatation devices and pressure washing.

"This is just one of the many projects DESC funds to ensure our personnel are safely operating, maintaining and repairing our fuel systems for the fleet," said Walton. "Over the last 10 years, DESC has provided FISC Yokosuka with more than $95 million in project funding for 456 sustainment, restoration and maintenance projects."

From conception to completion, a few challenges were overcome to guarantee environmental compliance during boom cleaning operations.

"The initial project did not include an oil-water separator and the location of the project was in the way of existing electrical pole tie downs," said Walton. "We had to move the location of the pad away from the security gate and we had to install an oil-water separator to ensure proper water treatment before release to the bay."

According to Walton the project is not only good for environmental compliance it also supports good relations between the U.S. and Japan.

"This is good for the local environment and for our relations with the local Japanese. In Hakozaki, we work right next to the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force; we share Azuma Island with the JMSDF. Any spills or releases to the environment not only reflect badly on FISC Yokosuka but on the U.S. Navy and the U.S. presence in Japan," said Walton. "We enjoy a very good relationship with the Japanese Government and we wouldn't want to jeopardize that by giving the appearance that we don't take environmental protection very seriously."

As the 2007 American Petroleum Institute's Best Navy Bulk Fuel Terminal, it is apparent Hakozaki Fuel Terminal puts safety and the environment first. Despite having no automated fuel handling equipment, in 2008 alone, the terminal staff performed 4,679 high-risk fuel handling evolutions, for a total of 519 million gallons dispersed, all without incident. Imagine fueling your car with enough gas to fill about 785 Olympic-size swimming pools and not spilling a drop.

FISC Fleet Mail Center, customs officials thwart counterfeiters

By PCCM(SW) Otilio Santos, Fleet Mail Center Yokohama

Attention travelers and bargain hunters living in Japan: While you may enjoy plenty of opportunities to travel to many of the exotic destinations in the Pacific including the Philippines, Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand and Korea, be careful what you purchase and ship via the military post office.

While traveling in these countries you may be greeted with rock-bottom prices on souvenirs: Gucci, Louis Vuitton, sports jerseys and recently released movies.

But shopper beware, that low-priced Gucci or Louis Vuitton handbag, one-of a-kind, throw-back sports jersey or hot-off-the-DVD-burner movie may look authentic but there is a good chance it is not.

U.S. Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC) Yokosuka Postal Division strives to educate travelers and shoppers on what can be mailed into Japan from surrounding countries.

If you decide to buy any of the previously mentioned items and mail them via military postal system to a Fleet Post Office (FPO) address in Japan, you may be asked by Japanese customs officials to produce paperwork identifying the items in question as originals.

If the paperwork cannot be produced those items will be destroyed by the Japanese Customs Office.

It is a process many travelers only realize after they have mailed all of their gifts to their military post office address and then returned to Japan.

Instead of receiving a package full of goodies, they may receive a letter from the officer in charge of the FISC Fleet Mail Center (FMC) Yokohama stating that all of their merchandise has been confiscated and will be destroyed by Japanese customs officials, who have an office located within FMC Yokohama.

Japanese customs officials actively scan all mail that transits FMC in an effort to identify any merchandise that violates copy and property rights of a company.

Any merchandise that is determined to be counterfeit, has been altered in any way from its original design or infringes on a patent, will be confiscated and destroyed.

Counterfeit merchandise is not the only thing that Japanese customs officials are on the lookout for during their searches at FMC Yokohama.

Customs officials also search for the many items that are prohibited from being mailed in the military postal system, to and from Japan. If found, theses items are also destroyed.

Examples of other prohibited items include material such as alcohol and pornographic material.

This information is provided to deter customers from spending money on items that will be confiscated by customs officials upon arrival in Japan.

Enjoy your travels and buy only authentic merchandise that will make it through customs for you to enjoy.

Any questions regarding the above information can be addressed to Master Chief Postal Clerk (SW) Otilio Santos at 269-6726.

FMC Yokohama is an extension of FISC Yokosuka and serves as the chokepoint for mail entering and leaving Japan through the military postal system.

Japanese customs officials co-located with FISC Fleet Mail Center Yokohama employees ensure no prohibited items transit through the military postal system.

Photo by Blake Vives

Items prohibited from shipment in military postal system

Notice to all military postal patrons:

The following items may not be mailed through the military postal system and if discovered will be confiscated and destroyed by the Japanese Customs Office at Fleet Mail Center Yokohama.

- Firearms, ammunition and firearm parts
- Counterfeit, altered or imitation coins, paper money, bank notes or securities
- Books, drawings, carvings or other articles that harm public security or morals (pornographic books, magazines, movies or DVDs)
- Articles that infringe upon patent rights, trademarks and copyrights such as imitation designer bags, pirated software and DVDs
- Alcohol
- Opium, other narcotic drugs, drug paraphernalia, stimulants (including Vicks inhalers and Sudafed) and psychotropic substances.

This excludes those substances designated as acceptable by the ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare.