**New operating procedures to mitigate physiological episodes**

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Naval Aviation’s operating instruction has been updated with information to help aviators not only mitigate but avoid physiological episodes—naval aviation’s No. 1 safety priority. Physiological episodes (PEs) occur when aircrew experience physiological symptoms such as dizziness or cognitive degradation which may impair their ability to perform cockpit duties.

The Physiological Episodes Action Team (PEAT) has incorporated what they’ve learned in the “General Flight and Operating Instructions Manual CNAF M-3710.7” after extensive Root Cause Corrective Action (RCCA) analyses of aircraft systems and medical investigations since the PEAT’s inception in 2017.

Vice Adm. DeWolfe Miller III, commander, Naval Air Forces, signed the overarching instruction Sept. 9 and it was released to the fleet Oct. 6, paving the way for updates to emergency procedures in the Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures Standardization (NATOPS) documents for the F/A-18 Hornet/Super Hornet and T-45 Goshawk, said Cmdr. Adrian Jope, PEAT lead.

“The updates are designed to change mindsets and outline procedures to mitigate and prevent physiological episodes,” Jope said. Aviators rely on their specific platform NATOPS document for how to operate the aircraft, its systems and emergency procedures.

“We have been sharing what we’ve learned with the fleet in ready rooms and auditoriums during our PE briefings, or PE TED Talks, but now they have an updated instruction in the newly revised CNAF 3710 in which to reference,” Jope said.

Major additions to the CNAF 3710 and follow-on proposed changes to the individual platform NATOPS include improved mask usage guidelines, the introduction of strategic air breaks to improve respiratory capacity, updated emergency procedures, as well as enhanced explanations of the functionality of On-Board Oxygen Generating System (OBOGS) and Environmental Control System (ECS), Jope said.

The new NATOPS procedures are expected to be released to the fleet in the coming months.

“We’ve been told for a long time that we will wear our mask from takeoff to landing unless we needed to make subtle adjustments or move it aside to take a drink of water. Over the course of the last couple of years, we’ve learned that breathing with a mask for long periods of time can create physiological challenges, and if left unchecked can potentially lead to adverse physiological symptoms. As such, we have learned that by dropping the mask to take cleansing breaths at appropriate opportunities below 10,000 feet cabin altitude...”