T-34Cs return to squadrons ahead of schedule, under budget

By Danice Leddon Wilson
NAWCAD AIRWorks Communications

T-34C Turbo Mentors begin making their way back to Navy and Marine Corps training squadrons this month after completing standard five-year aircraft conditional inspections.Remarkably, the first T-34C aircraft completed six weeks ahead of schedule and 25 percent under budget during a pandemic.

The two-seat turboprop trainers were waiting for stem-to-stern inspections to keep them in top operational condition, and Navy and Marine Corps flight training on track. The Navy’s Undergraduate Flight Training Systems program office (PMA-273) was working to expedite inspections and reduce turnaround times while freeing the busy Navy Fleet Readiness Center Southeast to focus on other high-priority fleet needs. The program office asked Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division’s in-house government lead systems integrator, AIRWorks, to help find a fast, cost effective solution.

AIRWorks is certified to AS9100D, an international standard for managing rapid prototyping and limited production of air vehicle systems and subsystems. AS9100D includes the ISO 9001:2015 standard and additional aviation, space, and defense industry requirements.

Tapped by the program office to develop the project plan for improved T-34 aircraft conditionals, AIRWorks’ collaborative working approach helped them safely make progress during COVID-19 restrictions.

The AIRWorks team had a short timeline to get work on contract and work got underway. The AIRWorks’ collaborative working approach proved especially advantageous when inspectors discovered corrosion issues during the first T-34C inspection. AIRWorks facilitated the FRC’s engineering support and relayed the information back to Stevens so work could continue.

The team’s collaborative, communicative approach helped them safely make progress while COVID-19 restrictions began in March 2020. “We discovered new and better ways to get work done in a socially distanced environment,” said Matos. “I think we became more focused because of telework. We were actually able to be more responsive, turn things around quicker, and nobody got sick.”

AIRWorks received its second and third aircraft for inspection in summer 2020, one month ahead of schedule. This allowed the first aircraft to return to the squadron when the third aircraft arrived at the contractor facility, saving additional time and resources as well as increasing training squadron readiness.

Three aircraft are expected to complete inspections in the first year of the project. All aircraft are anticipated to be complete by 2023.

Drivers reminded to be vigilant during deer rutting season

By Donna Cipolloni
NAS Patuxent River Public Affairs

The annual white-tailed deer mating season, or rut, is underway through mid-December and motorists are cautioned to drive vigilantly both out in the community and onboard NAS Patuxent River.

“Most deer/vehicle strikes occur about an hour before and after sunrise or sunset and, unfortunately in fall and winter, those times of day happen to coincide with most people coming on and going off base,” said Jim Swift, Pax River natural resources specialist.

Swift explained there’s increased deer activity during rutting season because, as the deer search for mates, they move more frequently during the day and travel further distances than during other times of year.

“It picks up around the third week of October, but peak of the rut is the first full week of November; that’s when you’ll see the highest amount of activity,” he said.

Three aircraft are expected to complete inspections in the first year of the project. All aircraft are anticipated to be complete by 2023.

Deer activity is increased during rutting season. Never veer for deer, as making a sudden turn is dangerous and can place a driver at risk for injury or death. Be vigilant and slowdown in areas where deer are known to be frequently seen.