

NCE

More Than Nice to Know

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mishap you can take corrective action.

What corrective action must you take if NCE is involved in a mishap? You must first evaluate the mishap and determine if it's safety related or not.

If you determine it is a safety-related problem, then you must immediately report it through safety channels. This is a very important step and must be accomplished to ensure

other users of like equipment are notified of the mishap so we don't have to learn the same lesson twice. Air Force Instruction 91-204, *USAF Mishap Reporting*, details what requires reporting and how to report nuclear safety-related deficiencies, which are categorized as Dull Swords. These reports are used to identify problems to safety and design agencies as well as everyday users to ensure a resolution to the deficiency is found.

Another characteristic of NCE is it cannot be modified without approval from the item manager and only then if the change has been evaluated by the Air Force Safety Center (AFSC) to ensure there are no safety ramifications to nuclear surety. Modifications include all physical and/or functional configuration changes or any new uses for existing nuclear design safety certified items.

If you find an item with unauthorized modifications, remove it from service and report it via the Dull Sword process. The Air Force Safety Center will evaluate the modification and determine if it is still serviceable for its intended purpose, and therefore, still nuclear certified. If you have questions, contact your local safety office for additional guidance.

A last point, it is important to know that the owner/user is responsible for ensuring the equipment they use on weapon systems is certified. You must verify the equipment item is listed in the MNCL prior to use. Ensure that this validation process is part of your routine. Regular validation of equipment is necessary because of constant

changes in technical data guidance and the on-going testing of nuclear certified equipment, often causing certification to be removed. The only way to be sure the equipment you plan to use in your nuclear operation is certified or not is to check it against the appropriate technical data.

Remember, it's a good idea to take the time to check all equipment you use for nuclear certification, whether your mission is nuclear related or not. If your operation is nuclear in nature, it's critical to the safety of the weapons that you ensure all equipment has been evaluated and certified. If your operation involves conventional munitions, your handling, transportation, or inspection equipment may still be NCE, and you must identify potential safety-related deficiencies so that other users and item managers can address the deficiency expeditiously. The security of our nation and the safety of our nuclear weapons stockpile depend on the maintenance you perform. Do the right thing every time and make sure the equipment you're using is nuclear certified. ▶



“What is Nuclear Certified Equipment or NCE?” Let me start with the Air Force definition: “It is equipment that has met all nuclear safety criteria and is authorized for use with nuclear weapons.” “It is also referred to as ‘nuclear safety certification’ or ‘design certification.’”

These items have passed the rigorous testing and evaluation criteria necessary to earn the title

of NCE. They are listed in the *Master Nuclear Certification List (MNCL)* and are the only equipment and software authorized for use on nuclear weapon systems. Certain items such as specialized test sets and commercial vehicles may be certified by virtue of who provided or manufactured these items. Consult applicable technical data for further guidance on these items.

With the definition out of the way, how does it affect you? If

you are stationed at a nuclear-related base, you are probably familiar with NCE and how it is used. But, if you are stationed at a unit that does not have a nuclear-related commitment, NCE may still be a factor in your day-to-day operations.

Items we use daily, such as hoists, forklifts, test sets, trailers, and tow vehicles, may be NCE. It's important that you know what equipment in your organization is NCE so that in the event of a

... it's a good idea to take the time to check all equipment you use, whether nuclear related or not.