

# Face to face

These Boeing Test & Evaluation employees work side by side with military customers

By Kate Zaranek

It's not uncommon to find Boeing Test & Evaluation flight-test engineers Jen Cooper and Dan Antinone on the flight line at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., prepping an aircraft for a test sortie at 3:30 a.m.

Even that early in the morning there are jets to launch, and Cooper and Antinone, who are cross-trained in ground operations, safety procedures and mission systems, ensure the aircraft is properly configured for flight tests.

Few jobs at Boeing provide the daily customer interaction that Test & Evaluation employees experience while collocated at government sites. From Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md., to Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, Calif., approximately 400 test employees, known within the company as outplants, work side by side with U.S. Navy, Air Force and Army customers.

Working with the people who fly and maintain Boeing products, the collocated teams reduce support costs to customers and provide real-time access to Boeing expertise.

"We are the unofficial ambassadors for Boeing," said Paul Martin, who manages the outplant teams.

Keith Svendsen, chief of F-15 Test and Integration for the U.S. Air Force, said Boeing team performance has been exceptional.

"It's not always easy for a contractor team to operate on a government installation, but the team rolls with our changing processes to get the task done," Svendsen

said. "The attitude has always been one of getting the mission accomplished within the boundaries allowed and I have rarely been disappointed."

Coordinating with the maintenance and aircrews for 14 F-15s, the flight-test engineers have the big picture for the entire test program that other groups within the program may not see.

"We make sure we have a good jet. We know the details about the aircraft that the aircrew might not be aware of," Cooper said, adding: "The face-to-face interaction is invaluable to the test planning and execution and aids in ways that could not be accomplished nearly as quickly over email or the phone."

Seeing firsthand how customers interact with Boeing products also drives innovation.

For example, Ron Bear and the Test Requirements Analysis team developed software that allows testers such as Cooper and Antinone to upload test points onto a portable tablet, which transcribes test reports into a standard format that is delivered weekly to the Air Force.

What used to take the engineers about 16 hours to compile, standardize and format now takes about a minute. That gives test engineers more time for actual testing.

"There is no better job at Boeing. We get to sit in multimillion-dollar jets every day," Antinone said as he walked around the jet, checking items off his list on the tablet to ensure the aircraft was



configured properly for each test.

Boeing outplant employees often are seen as members of the government team and their presence is appreciated, as demonstrated by recent customer recognition.

Jeff Miller, a loads and dynamics engineer on the F/A-18 program for Test & Evaluation, recently received the inaugural VX-23 Test Engineer of the Year award from the Navy's VX-23 Squadron at Naval Air Station Patuxent River in recognition of his technical expertise.

The U.S. Navy also recognized the P-8A Clean Flutter Test Team with a citation.

Despite their geographical distance from Boeing sites, outplant teams are

**PHOTOS: (Insets)** Dan Antinone, left, and Jen Cooper are part of the Boeing Test & Evaluation team at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. **(Below)** Their work includes interacting with U.S. Air Force customer representatives, including Tech. Sgt. John Gann, center.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

proud to be part of Boeing, and take pride in the work they do for the customer.

"We wear two hats here—one for Boeing and one for the Air Force, and they interchange often," said Roger Henicke, a Test & Evaluation missions systems specialist at Eglin. "But Boeing and the Air Force have the same goal: Keep the warfighter safe. Those two hats become one." ■

*katryzina.p.zaranek@boeing.com*

