

## Record numbers Swarm to November Lunch & Learn

DDC Inventory initiative making a big buzz

Lori Spiegel, DDC Command Affairs

Defense Distribution Center (DDC) employees swarmed to the November Lunch & Learn. In fact, they came in record numbers—more than 70 in all—to listen to Inventory Integrity Program Manager Chris Lubic talk about DLA’s inventory accuracy plan, appropriately named “Swarm.”

“In 1992, DLA assumed the responsibility of DOD’s storage and distribution supplies, billions of dollars worth of stock became our responsibility overnight, and we took the customers’ word for what was on record,” according to Lubic.

Thus began the Inventory Accuracy initiative, when in 2003 DLA Director VADM Keith W. Lippert, SC, USN, asked the DDC inventory team to “Swarm the depots” to get well—in other words, to improve Inventory Accuracy at all of DDC’s worldwide distribution centers.

Swarm, as some believe, is actually not an acronym.

“Swarm is an initiative to identify and correct where processes are breaking down in inventory and to fix those processes,” said Lubic. “Inventory Accuracy is a symptom of wrong actions in the distribution process. It could happen anywhere—wrong receipt quantities, wrong location of stowed material, wrong material picked, and even erroneous inventory counts. These are basically people errors which affect the accountable record.”

As a result of the initiative, an Inventory Integrity Team, consisting of nine members based in Mechanicsburg, Pa., work together to manage the DDC-wide inventory integrity program which

includes conducting inventory counts, Location Surveys, Denial and Causative Research.

Lubic told the group that Inventory Integrity can be summed up in two words—customer confidence.

“The bottom line to our customers is that we, the DDC enterprise, are the custodians of their material, and when they need it, we’d better have it and be able to ship it to meet their requirements,” said Lubic. “It is imperative that we instill customer trust through the safekeeping of their material.”



And by all accounts, Inventory Accuracy is a challenging goal—with 26 distribution centers worldwide, nearly four million different stock numbers, more than 319 million cubic feet of storage space, and almost 26 million transactions last fiscal year.

Part of the plan, as Lubic described, included an appointing an Accountable Officer who reports to the Commander at each distribution center. This person analyzes material adjustments that occur and works with operational managers to address processes that are causing the gains and losses. It is their job to ensure record integrity and to develop a monthly Inventory Accuracy metrics report.

Swarm is a massive six-step process to improve DDC’s Inventory Accuracy by February 2006.

“The six steps revolve around an enhanced system and also a better trained workforce so they have the knowledge to perform work tasks correctly,” said Lubic. “One of the first things we did was look for system enhancements in the Distribution Standard System that would be geared towards preventing errors.”

The cornerstone of the Swarm project is four comprehensive formal training modules which include Policy, Functional and training—in the areas that have direct impact on Inventory Accuracy. These areas include Stock Readiness, Inventory, Receiving, and Warehousing.

Other steps include cleaning up the warehouses through training, re-warehousing, ensuring locations are marked correctly, conducting wall-to-

wall inventories, and correcting the erroneous records.

The Inventory Integrity Team sends Swarm posters and calendars to each distribution center to advertise the program and keep it on the employees’ minds.



Inventory Integrity Program Manager Chris Lubic talks about DLA’s Inventory Accuracy plan, appropriately named “Swarm,” at DDC’s November Lunch & Learn.



A record number of DDC HQ employees swarmed to the November Lunch & Learn to learn about DLA’s inventory accuracy plan.

## Inventory training supports Swarm initiatives

By Lori Spiegel, DDC Command Affairs

As proof that inventory training has paid off, DDC Commander BG Michael Lally, USA, presented several Inventory Accuracy awards to DDC deputy commanders at the December Deputy Commander Leadership Conference.

Nine distribution centers met all inventory accuracy goals.

In 2003, DLA Director VADM Keith W. Lippert, SC, USN, created an Inventory Accuracy initiative when he asked the inventory teams to “Swarm” the depots.”