

Culture's Role in Preventing Injury at DDYJ

By Jessica Walter-Groft, DDC Command Affairs

In May 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld began a department-wide accident reduction effort. He challenged all Department of Defense (DoD) leaders to reduce the number of accidents and mishaps by at least 50 percent in the next two years. "These goals are achievable, and will directly increase our operational readiness. We owe no less to the men and women who defend our nation," said Secretary Rumsfeld.



Employees at DDYJ perform morning exercises, decreasing their risk of injury.

Defense Distribution Depot Yokosuka, Japan (DDYJ), has very few on-the-job mishaps. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2003, DDYJ only had four mishaps. The average for the other 21 depots was 45. DDC Safety Manager Dave Mack attributes this to the impact of culture on DDYJ employees. For example, all DDYJ employees take part in a short exercise program that is broadcast throughout the

installation each morning. Since these employees have a job that can be physically demanding, the morning stretches help to warm up their muscles and prevent strain.

Another cultural component that aids in accident prevention at DDYJ is repeated commands. At DDYJ, it is a common practice for employees to repeat commands back to their supervisors. So if they are asked to "move that box onto the pallet," they repeat it: "I will move this box onto the pallet." By doing this, the employees dramatically reduce the chance of miscommunication that may result in injury.

"I realize that American culture differs from that of the Japanese, but this gives us something to work toward. DDYJ is a perfect example of how improving attitudes and behavior can dramatically reduce injury," said Mack.



The majority of injuries that result in lost workdays are back and hand injuries, strains and sprains.
