

Paperless process

Documents flow electronically with new transfer system

By Staff Sgt. Michael Duhe
437 AW Public Affairs

A new paperless system of conducting business on base is making life easier for many people.

With the Automated Business Services System, all financial documents, such as requests for purchase and IMPAC forms, are routed electronically from office to office. ABSS is also being used to route TDY orders, as well.

"I think it's saving people a lot of time," said Susann Fairchild, stock fund manager for the 437th Supply Squadron. "It's very convenient."

ABSS, an Air Force-wide system, was put online at Charleston AFB last October. Prior to the new system, the forms were typed in Formflow, printed and manually brought to each coordinating agency for approval. It was then taken back to the document's originator before ending up in the finance office. ABSS has taken the legwork out of this process.

The routing process for financial forms may vary from unit to unit, so ABSS is customized for its users. The specific route for a unit is known as a "document flow." Each unit has a module manager who oversees ABSS. Fairchild is the 437th SUPS module manager for ABSS, and her office is responsible for obtaining cost center

manager passwords and setting up document flows. She's also a cost center manager for the supply squadron.

To help prepare



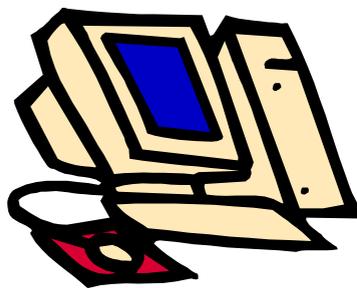
the base for ABSS, training was provided last year in July and August by Tech. Sgt. Stephanie Upshaw of the 437th Comptroller Squadron. Upshaw is the Implementation/Functional Manager for ABSS. As functional manager, she maintains ABSS user accounts. She acts as a liaison between the users at the group or squadron levels and the ABSS office within the comptroller squadron, helping users resolve document or flow problems. She's also the liaison between the base and the contractor who developed and installed ABSS.

"If there's a problem we can't solve here, we'll call them," she said.

In addition to saving time and legwork, another benefit of ABSS is ac-

countability, Upshaw said. Documents can be tracked and located at all times. The system is also reliable - a dedicated network server has been

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set up on base to handle ABSS traffic.

Online help is available for ABSS users, or they can contact their unit modular manager. Upshaw often helps modular managers troubleshoot problems.

Some people have been hesitant about the new system because they haven't been trained to use it, Upshaw said. "I think the main reason is that a lot of people don't understand how it works, and that goes back to the training. But now people are getting used to it."

"It's a new system and it will take time to learn it," Fairchild said. "We're still kind of in a learning mode with this. It's going to take time to learn it, particularly when you don't do cer-

tain tasks every day. When we fund our IMPAC card, we may only use that form once every three months. But the (TDY) orders are going a lot better because we work them more often than we do with some of the other forms."

Despite some initial apprehension, many are now comfortable with it.

"I like it - it's really helpful," said Lynn Ihnen, who handles operations resources and requirements for the 437th Operations Group. "With the manning cutbacks we've had, it helps to be able to electronically route forms. I think as more people get accustomed to using it, they'll like it as well."

Another change brought with the new system is that it cuts down on "face time" with other people, Fairchild said.

"For instance, since we've implemented this, my trips to finance have gone to maybe once a month," she said. "Before, I would be talking to them three or four times a week. People will have to get used to that."

Upshaw said she is receiving fewer calls for assistance with ABSS, as users are becoming familiar with the system.

"The more you use it and see what the system can do, the more you appreciate it," she said.

Suits

continued from page 1

On Tuesday, base supply members determined that 34 of the 86 suits were with deployed base members. Most of the suits are with deployed base aircrew members who keep them for a one-year period since they often deploy.

"We decided to pull certain suits based on the fact that the Army had found seven suits with deficiencies from a lot of about 500 that had sat in a warehouse for three and half to four years," said Gerda Parr, a DLA spokesperson. She emphasized that the suits were pulled as a precautionary measure and that more than likely that there are no serious defects, but rather a problem with how the suits were being stored and their age.

"We looked at the so-called defective suits, but couldn't see anything wrong with them. If they are defective, it is very hard to see," said Snodgrass. The charcoal lined suits cost about \$137 and no problems were found with the matching masks, gloves or boots. "We train in these suits for hours and it involves lots of rest cycles and they can be a chore to wear, but it's better to be safe than sorry."

The chemical protective suits are designed to protect against liquid or powder chemical attack agents. Istratex manufactured the suits, a New York based company that has since gone bankrupt.

"The lot in question, the 1992 lot, was 173,000. That's the one, which is at issue, not the total 778,000 (as recently reported in the news media). Out of that 1992 lot, we issued 120,000 for use. We still have 53,000 of those in our warehouses, which we've still had on hold since that point in time and have not issued," said Glisson. "Where we are today is we've issued a message to the field in both December and in February identifying the lot numbers and asking the field that if you have any of these, please check to ensure suitability."

Wings welcome honorary commanders

By Staff Sgt. Raymond F. Padgett
315 AW Public Affairs

The uniform of the day for 61 of Team Charleston's newest commanders deviated from the normal selection of flight suits, BDUs, or service dress to civilian suits and business casual, as they attended the honorary commander program's kickoff luncheon last week at the Charleston Club.

Team Charleston units, active and Reserve, selected area civic leaders and business owners as their honorary commanders. The honorary commanders' civilian jobs parallel the units mission and range from doctors, law enforcement and company managers to a Representative in the State Legislature.

"The (honorary commander) program is actually a re-invigoration of a very successful program of the past. It was a very effective way to reach out into the community and create a better understanding of what we do at Charleston AFB," said Col. Edward A. Stickler, 315th Airlift Wing commander.

During the luncheon, honorary commanders received identification cards and were presented a Team Charleston coin by Stickler and 437th Airlift Wing Vice Commander Col. Karl B. Young before spending the rest of the day in "their" new units.

"Our hope is to increase community involvement in the base and get a good dialogue going," Young said. "I see this program as a win-win for everyone. The squadron and group commanders get a better handle on what issues affect and concern the community in which so many of our

people live. The civic leaders benefit because they learn more about their Air Force and how their taxpayer dollars are being used."

Stickler said he sees the program as a way for the Air Force to tell its story to civic leaders and employers. Young echoed Stickler's comments and added that he heard lots of positive comments from everyone about the program.

The honorary commander's tenure will be for one year. In addition to attending unit functions, they will receive an orientation flight, base tours and club membership.

The Honorable Henry E. Brown, a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives, was selected as the Honorary Commander of the 315th Airlift Wing. Brown's family has long been affiliated with the military -- his father retired from the Charleston Naval Shipyard and Rep. Brown worked in the comptrollers office for three years.

"I'm excited about the program," Brown said, "It's important to have interaction between the military and civilian population."

"Representative Brown is an exceptionally important and influential local leader with the ability to represent all of us in the wing both on and off base," Stickler said of his honorary counterpart.

Brown said he is interested in encroachment issues that have affected other South Carolina installations, but wants to start by "learning more about the mission and how to further the mission."

The honorary commander's program is managed by the 437th and 315th Public Affairs offices.