



News Release

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

437th AIRLIFT WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE
102 East Hill Blvd., Rm. 223, Charleston AFB, S.C. 29404-5154
Phone: (843) 963-5608, 5588 or 5589 Fax (843) 963-5604

PAO email: edmund.memi@charleston.af.mil
After duty hours, call the base operator or
command post (963-2531) & ask for a PA rep

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CAFB's PRECISION MEASUREMENT EQUIPMENT LABORATORY EARNS HIGH MARKS DURING ASSESSMENT

CHARLESTON AFB, SC -- The 437th Maintenance Squadron's Precision Measurement Equipment Laboratory recently achieved high marks during a certification inspection.

"The equipment we support touches every organization on Charleston AFB, tenant units including the Coast Guard, Navy and National Guard, as well as other geographically separated units in locations from the Caribbean to Central and South America," said Master Sgt. William Seabreeze, 437 MXS Test, Measurement and Diagnostic Equipment Flight superintendent. "We are currently the Air Force depot support location for night vision goggle test sets, East Coast support location for portable balance units, and we provide lateral support across the command (Air Mobility Command) for high-voltage calibration measurement."

Charleston AFB's PMEL underwent its Air Force Metrology and Calibration Program Laboratory Evaluation May 13-20, according to Seabreeze. This was the lab's first evaluation under the newly revised AFMETCAL audit criteria.

Seabreeze said upon conclusion of the audit, inspectors noted the lab exceeded all measurement audit areas and clearly demonstrated the ability to perform accurate measurements.

"Inspectors were most impressed with the personnel training and technicians' ability to flawlessly perform numerous complex measurements," Seabreeze said. "During the Measurement Capability Assessment portion of the audit, PMEL received 'zero product nonconformities.' This was particularly noteworthy, considering 25 percent of the items selected were calibrated by apprentice technicians."

For the lab's outstanding efforts, PMEL received on-the-spot AFMETCAL Audit Certification, according to Seabreeze.

The objective of the certification program is to assess each PMEL's capability to perform measurements that are accurate, uniform, reliable and traceable through the Air Force Primary Standards Laboratory to the National Institute of Standards and Technology, according to Master Sgt. Robert Adrian, laboratory chief. Each PMEL is assessed approximately every 24 months.

There are three stages in the certification process: pre-assessment, on-site assessment and certification review.

The pre-assessment stage involves reviewing the PMEL quality system documentation to assess its compliance with Technical Order 00-20-14 and other Air Force directives, according to Staff Sgt. David Polmanteer, PMEL quality assurance. This stage requires the lab to submit its quality manual, master inventory data, previous 12 months of quality program data, copies of critical nonconformity worksheets, trend analysis based on quality program findings and other crucial information.

Following the pre-assessment, AFMETCAL visits PMEL for the on-site assessment, according to Seabreeze.

“During the on-site assessment, the team performed a follow-up on any questions that were raised during the pre-assessment,” Seabreeze said. “They verified that we are doing the things we said in our quality manual and performed the MCA (Measurement Capability Assessment).

“To perform the MCA, assessment team members selected items based on our master inventory data and assigned technicians,” Seabreeze continued. “The selected items and the certifying technician performed the calibration under observation. If a defect had been found, more items with the same part number, certified by the same technician, would have been selected. The idea is to investigate the processes and gather objective evidence before concluding a problem exists.”

Seabreeze said the ultimate goal of the MCA is to establish “confidence in competence.”

Other areas audited during the on-site assessment include compliance with quality program requirements, and with facility and environmental requirements, according to Seabreeze.

“During the facility and environmental control system assessment, the team assessed our facility, looking for the ability to perform the accurate transfer of precision measurements,” Seabreeze said. “They looked for obvious facility deficiencies while performing the MCA and any effect of facility problems as they observed precise measurements.”

Upon completion of the on-site assessment, all evaluations are reviewed by a panel of evaluators for accuracy and to maintain consistency, according to Seabreeze. Ultimately, the certification decision rests with the AFMETCAL commander. CAFB’s PMEL has a far-reaching mission.

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