

## Bowers make draining KC-135s more efficient

by Crystal Lavadour  
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4/13/2005 - FAIRCHILD AIR FORCE BASE, Wash. (AFP) -- A new piece of equipment is making things cleaner and easier for 92nd Maintenance Squadron Airmen here.

While the two fuel bowser are still new, Airmen have found the machines greatly improve the process of draining fuel from KC-135 Stratotankers, said Staff Sgt. David Shurley, a fuels systems journeyman with the 92nd MXS.

"It is a quicker, more efficient way of performing maintenance so the jets can perform their missions," he said.

It is important to find ways to make upgrades and improve processes to limit the amount of down time to better support deployed servicemembers, said 1st Lt. Brian Hughes, the officer in charge of the accessories flight for the 92nd MXS.

"The KC-135 fuel system is the lifeblood of the aircraft," Lieutenant Hughes said. "The fuel system is its mission. This new technology will greatly aid us in getting our vital resource, fuel, to the fight."

To allow for safe fuel-system maintenance, crews use a bowser to drain fuel that is left after the normal draining process. The fuel drains into a tank through a hose attached to the wing of the aircraft.

The older models relied solely on gravity to drain the tank, whereas the newer models have pumps, which vacuum fuel out of the tank, the lieutenant said.

Because the old bowser did not have the vacuum seal, fuel would quite often leak and get onto the maintainer and the ground.

The new system eliminates fuel escape, said Tech. Sgt. Scott Rabideaux, a shift supervisor with the 92nd MXS.

"With these you won't even get a drop on you or the floor," he said.

By using these hoses, the fuel-systems maintainers come into less contact with the fuel, and there are fewer fuel vapors released into the area, creating a much safer working environment for all the technicians, officials said.

This is a very messy job, especially when using the older fuel bowsters, Lieutenant Hughes said. The leaks from the old bowsters were not only messy, but also time consuming because cleanup time was added into the process.

"Not only is it a cleaner process, but a faster one," Sergeant Shurley said.

However, the new machines save time in several other ways as well.

With the old way, operators could only drain one tank at a time. Now, they can do as many as four at once, Sergeant Shurley said.

Now, the process only takes about 10 minutes. The old way took as long as an hour to accomplish the same task, he said.



FAIRCHILD AIR FORCE BASE, Wash. -- Senior Airman Nicholas Hamstra applies vacuum pressure to drain fuel from a KC-135 Stratotanker. The fuel bowser allows multiple tanks to be drained safer and quicker than the old draining method. Airman Hamstra is a fuel systems journeyman with the 92nd Maintenance Squadron here. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Clay Lancaster)