

SMALLTALK

about big ideas

Listen to Your Inner Alarm

By Jennifer Boykin

President, Newport News Shipbuilding

As I stood outside my doctor's office building with many others who evacuated with me, I wondered why so many people had decided to remain inside. Clearly, we all heard the same loud alarm.

*Did people assume the alarms were just a drill? Why don't they believe it's better to be 'safe than sorry?'
And, should I have **done more** to get them to evacuate?*

It was at that moment that I decided safety would be my next SmallTalk conversation topic. Safety and Security are not just departments at NNS – they are a way of life for shipbuilders. I believe we sometimes take for granted this culture. It's so ingrained into every fiber of our being that it takes being away from work to see that not everyone has this same perspective.

When I think about the recent hurricanes, fires and floods; or the attack on Las Vegas, I am reminded of one thing: The difference between life and death, in many cases, is how and when we respond.

I believe our culture helps us to prepare and react to the unthinkable. We are nuclear shipbuilders. Safety, quality, national security and responsibility are at the core of who we are and what we do. Lives depend on it, and depend on us.

My hope is that we never have to experience a natural disaster or an attack. But if we do, I believe the more we think ahead of what we will do, and the more we drill, the more likely our instincts will kick in and help keep us safe.

I encourage you to share an experience where you've put these attributes to the test – at work or personally. You never know how your experiences will make an impact on someone else. For me, the next time I hear a fire alarm, I will not only evacuate, I will listen to my inner alarm and encourage – no, I will demand – that others join me. I hope you will also feel confident in reminding others that practicing may make all the difference for the real event.

