

Defense *advocate*

Newport News Shipyard



Welder Kim Kerins burns the initials of ship's sponsor into the keel of the Virginia-class submarine *New Mexico* (SSN 779) during a keel authentication ceremony at Newport News Shipyard.

Navy photo, April 12, 2008

"We think this is the first time in the shipyard's history," said Ken Mahler, Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding's Senior VP for Navy Programs. History isn't taken lightly at the Newport News Shipyard, where the first ship built in 1891 is still on display, but Mahler was talking about having four of the Navy's 11 active aircraft carriers on site.

Mahler's words were a fitting start to VNDIA's visit to the Virginia Advanced Shipbuilding & Carrier Integration Center (VASCIC) and the Newport News Shipyard on August 31. In addition to meeting with Mahler, authority board members and staff, led by retired Rear Adm. Bob Fountain, were given a rare look at the planning, technology and manufacturing that goes into building nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers. The visit was book-

ended by a look at huge sheets of steel in various states that will become the USS Gerald R. Ford, including the first keel piece set to be laid this November, and a drive past the USS Enterprise, the oldest and most storied carrier in the fleet, in for what will likely be her final major maintenance stop. In between were the "Big Stick" USS Theodore Roosevelt, the USS Carl Vinson and the recently commissioned USS George H.W. Bush.

The 550-acre shipyard isn't all carriers, however. In a unique arrangement, Northrop Grumman shares construction of all Virginia-class submarines with General Dynamics Electric Boat, trading delivery of the finished products. The tour included a look at the Minnesota and California, both at different stages of finish. They are being constructed with tolerances to the smallest fraction of the inch in a massive indoor facility by the most skilled craftsmen, all to make them ready to spend their working lives under the oceans and around the world, operating in the harshest conditions imaginable.

The real story at Newport News, however, isn't nuclear power or tonnage or sonar arrays. It's the workforce. With around 20,000 employees, the shipyard is the largest industrial employer in the Commonwealth.

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Coming Events

September 10, 2009

[Public Information Meeting NGA New Campus East \(EPG Site\)](#)

Springfield, Va.

Contact: 1-877-BNV-2424/info@belvoirnewvision.com

September 24, 2009

[Fort Monroe FADA Meeting](#)

Fort Monroe, Va.

Contact: FMFADA, (757) 637-7778/lbaker@fmfada.com

September 25, 2009

[Hampton Roads Military & Federal Facilities Alliance Meeting](#)

Norfolk, Va.

Contact: Dan Abrams, (757) 644-6324

October 22, 2009

[Military Job Fair of Virginia](#)

Hampton, Va.

Contact: Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, (757) 262-2000

October 27, 2009

[Virginia Military Advisory Council](#)

Norfolk, Va.

Contact: Wendy Hoffman, Office of Commonwealth Preparedness, (810) 225-3826

October 28, 2009

[VNDIA Quarterly Board Meeting](#)

Virginia Beach, Va.

Contact: Patrick Tremblay, (804) 545-5716/ptremblay@yesvirginia.org

Shipyard, cont.



The aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) completed a scheduled refueling complex overhaul (RCOH) in July at Northrop Grumman Newport News Shipyard. *Navy photo.*

About 2,500 of these workers are graduates of the shipyard's Apprentice School, which Rear Adm. Fountain calls "an absolute gem" and one of the keys to the technical base in the region. The school graduates 250 people a year from four- to five-year programs, and ten people apply for every opening, making it one of the most selective higher education experiences in the state.

Both technology and history is embodied by the yard's "master shipbuilders." To earn this title, workers must have 40 years experience in the field. Newport News has 689 of them. The shipyard also regularly provides work for around 5,000 contractors, and hosts the crews of the Navy ships on which it is working. Right now that means more than 10,000 sailors.

Whenever you see a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier, and most of the nuclear-powered submarines, know that it was made with pride, in Virginia.

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Virginia Tech and the Naval Surface Warfare Center at Dahlgren signed a five-year, \$7.5 million contract and a cooperative research agreement on August 11. The new agreements compliment a memorandum of understanding signed between the two in November 2008 to develop mutually beneficial research projects and activities.

"This contract and [research agreement] are the result of a full spectrum relationship," said NSWC Dahlgren Division Commander Capt. Sheila Patterson. "Our relationship and cooperation with Virginia Tech continues to positively impact the ability of young scientists and engineers to support the Navy."

Dr. Christopher Cornelius, Director of Virginia Tech's Center for Naval Systems says the agreements offer "access to unique labs and facilities at each institution; joint publication of studies; evaluations and lessons learned; and acceleration and expansion of promising technologies for national security." He added, "I consider working for national security very important."



Since last fall's agreement, Virginia Tech and Dahlgren's collaborative research has included pulsed and high power electromagnetic technology, ground unmanned support systems, railgun technology and creation of radio frequency propagation models.

NSWC Dahlgren Division is a \$1.2 billion business that partners with industry and academia to provide solutions for the Navy and other federal customers. Virginia Tech has carried out many research projects for the warfare center during the past 25 years, primarily on shipboard systems and materials.

The NSWC is the largest tenant on the King George County base, known for its highly educated and technically proficient workforce. The University of Mary Washington is constructing an education center adjacent to the base that will provide degree-granting opportunities for those at the installation and in the surrounding community.

Va. Tech and the NSWC



Capt. Sheila Patterson.
Navy photo.