

Army Rapidly Develops Expeditionary Fire Suppression Refill Station

Pat Schlue

In September 2009, the Army's Product Manager Sets, Kits, Outfits, and Tools (PM SKOT) received the first of many Operational Need Statements (ONS) requesting a mobile fire suppression refill station. The ONS described common issues surrounding fire suppression equipment; variations in size, deployment type, and chemical composition were each addressed. Additionally, the refill equipment is disjointed and spread throughout the theater. The ONS addressed an urgent need to consolidate refill capabilities into a transportable container, effectively keeping a Soldier's fire suppression equipment fully mission capable. To expedite development, an integrated product team (IPT) consisting of various disciplines was rapidly assembled under PM SKOT guidance to research the problem and develop a materiel solution. The IPT consisted of leaders, logistical personnel, engineers, skilled laborers, Soldiers, former Soldiers, firefighters, and procurement personnel—all of whom brought a vast amount of knowledge to the task at hand. Upon thorough review of the various fire suppression apparatuses, as well as the refill requirements, the team set in motion a solid acquisition strategy.

In September 2009, PM SKOT received the first of many ONS requesting a mobile fire suppression refill station. (U.S. Army photo by Laura MacManus, PM SKOT.)



Teamwork

Using a previously tested and proven enclosure with self-contained power and environmental control, the team researched and procured the necessary commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) refill devices to integrate within that container. The team members worked diligently during a 2-month period obtaining the components, designing a layout, and mounting the hardware. Their quick actions resulted in a proof of concept that was displayed and demonstrated at the quarterly Tool Set and Test, Measurement, and Diagnostic Equipment Transformation Board of Directors meeting in December 2009. “The IPT’s approach to address this urgent requirement provides an outstanding example of how a system can be rapidly developed without significantly impacting logistical considerations,” stated LTC Brian Tachias, PM SKOT.

The enclosure assembly is fully provisioned and organically supported. Transportability of the system will use existing vehicular and Material Handling Equipment systems. The refill equipment is a COTS solution with publications that will be validated and augmented for Army use. Supply support for the COTS items will be provided by the PM SKOT warranty/replacement website, which provides support for all Army SKOT under PM SKOT’s charter. “We are looking



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to field a mission-capable system in approximately 12–14 months,” added Tachias. “Traditional approaches in the acquisition of Acquisition Category III systems of this type can take two to three times that long.”

Safety certification testing of a product representative system (PRS) was completed at Yuma Proving Ground (YPG), AZ, in March 2010. Following safety certification, the PRS will be released to Afghanistan for user feedback. A competitive solicitation will be used to ultimately award a production contract to support the quantities required by the ONS.

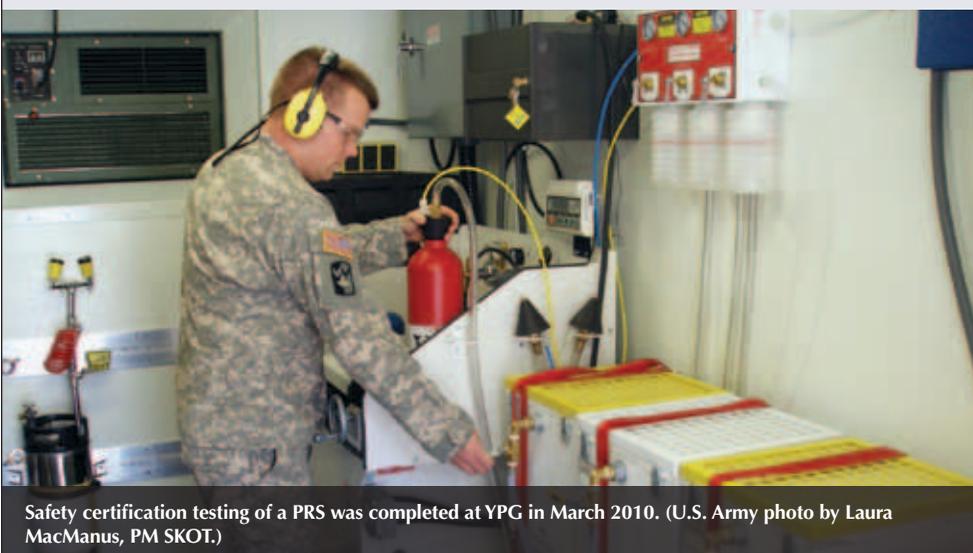
“This once again shows that the PM SKOT team is up to the challenge to support the warfighter,” added Tachias.

“The fielding of this system will not only increase readiness, but will ultimately save more lives by keeping crucial fire suppression systems fully mission capable.”

PM SKOT

PM SKOT is aligned under the management of the U.S. Army Project Manager Joint Combat Service Support, which is under the leadership of Program Executive Office Combat Support and Combat Service Support. Their vision is to provide the Army and joint services with life-cycle oversight for all SKOTs, while providing high-quality services, modernizing and modularizing current SKOTs, and optimizing the logistical footprint for future systems. They provide warfighters with SKOTs that are high-quality, durable, reliable, modernized, deployable, and serve as a “one-stop shop” for life-cycle management service.

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Safety certification testing of a PRS was completed at YPG in March 2010. (U.S. Army photo by Laura MacManus, PM SKOT.)