Field Maintenance Shops Keep Equipment Up and Running

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The arms technician balances the pistol delicately in her hand. With precise care, she disassembles the piece and began her detailed work to correct its fault. Distractions are not an option for this Soldier; her labor requires unshakable focus. Her duty means more than the mere operation of equipment; it means someone's life. She understands all too well a that a servicemember relies on this equipment for his life.

For the personnel manning the maintenance shops that support south and central Texas, attention and accuracy are the cornerstones of their service. From weapons and tools to vehicles and machinery, the shops responsible for area units ensure that all equipment which passes through their doors will return to its owner deployment ready.

CSMS Capabilities

1. Body Shop
2. Welding
3. Machine Shop
4. Sign Shop
5. Lock Smith
6. Radiation
7. Canvas
8. Carpenter
9. Painting
10. B-Blast

The journey that a faulty piece takes toward repair is thorough and complex. With safety and security on the line, no chances are taken and no corners are cut.

The first step begins at the unit level. The unit representative takes the defective equipment to their local Field Maintenance Shop (FMS), the first-line teams that service the units of a given installation or lower organization level.

"We support 32 DODAACS," said Sgt. Hector T. Pinon, a technician with FMS #4. "We support all of Camp Mabry to 10/20 standards," or fully mission capable. DODAACS are a class code relating to a unit's supply needs.

With each mechanic responsible for roughly 50 pieces of equipment, the troops of FMS #4 recognize the need for a fully functional, efficient system. When the FMS receives an item, the team begins work right away to correct its deficiency. If the shop has the necessary part on hand, turnaround can immediately follow its correction. If the part requires special ordering, two days to a week later, the FMS can return the repaired piece to its home unit.

Throughout this repair, a Command Maintenance Evaluation Team (COMET) reviews the work and procedures with regular inspections. The inspection team augments and works with the service team, rather than as an opposing force in the way of the technicians.

The 15 Soldiers of FMS #4 service a total of 645 rolling stock vehicles, to include HMMWVs, two-and-a-half ton trucks, cargo trailers and support vehicles.

Maintenance crews, like many full-time Guardsmen, work as technicians, which means they serve as contracted civilians who still wear their uniforms to work. "Nothing would happen if it weren't for the Soldiers/employees," said Sgt. 1st Class Matthew A. Matzen, NCOIC of FMS #4. "They're the ones that make everything work, I just guide them."

FMS personnel work tirelessly to service and accommodate their units. When a job requires specialized attention, however, the FMS directs the order to a higher echelon facility, the Combined Support Maintenance Shop (CSMS).

Augmenting the duties of the local FMSes, CSMSes perform functions not possible with the limited resources of their smaller counterparts.

"We have specialty shops the FMS shops are not equipped with," said Maj. M. Raymond Cooper, the assistant superintendent of Camp Mabry's CSMS #2. "We can fabricate or repair almost anything made out of metal, wood or plastic."

The two maintenance levels work closely together in a cohesive union of efficiency and organization. The priority, invariably, stays on the Soldiers and making them mission-ready.

CSMS #2, a pioneer of maintenance capabilities, boasts many services available to their coverage area, which stretches across all of south Texas and most of central Texas. Its 81 technicians operate the 10 sections of service ranging from painting and welding to lock smith functions and radiation management. Its 32 bays cover 91,000 square feet, featuring state of the art equipment.

"This is one of three facilities with capabilities of this caliber," said Maj. Cooper.

The shop also features a unique $100K environmentally-sound paint system donated by the State Environmental Office, two SRS-50 solvent distillation units and an armament section with over 1200 weapons.

"We support about 180 to 200 units right now," said Sgt. F. Yvonne Gonzales, an aviation support technician.

With such a wide range of functions, cross-training represents an essential component to succeeding as a shop employee.

"I do pretty much everything and stuff that I've never done in my life I'm learning now," said Spc. George E. Gracia, who mans seven of the 10 sections. "It's been a large learning experience."

The skill and precision required to service equipment meant to save the lives of Soldiers remain foremost in the mind of each technician. Never forgetting their role, these servicemembers exercise the

greatest care in their duty.

"It gives you a sense of pride," said Spc. Andrea L. Newby, an armament technician at CSMS #2. "You really have to do a good job. Its people's lives. It makes you take your job very seriously."

At the heart of any CSMS lies the committed team of inspectors, upholding the standards for all serviceable equipment.

"The guys that come to this shop here are the best of the best," said Lt. Col. James R. Cook, production manager for CSMS #2. "They've proven in their fields and that's how they end up inspectors. They inspect and certify the work of other mechanics."

Production control, via the FMS, stands as the support behind the support, keeping the ship sailing smoothly.

"We are the first and last place customers go," said Staff Sgt. Joan M. Nesvold, the senior production controller.

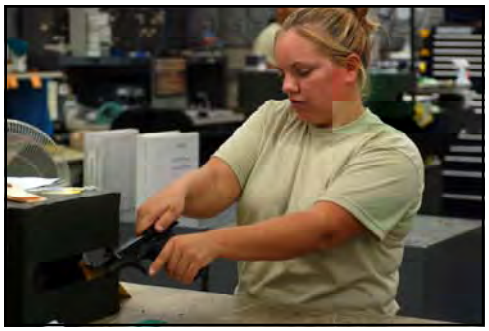
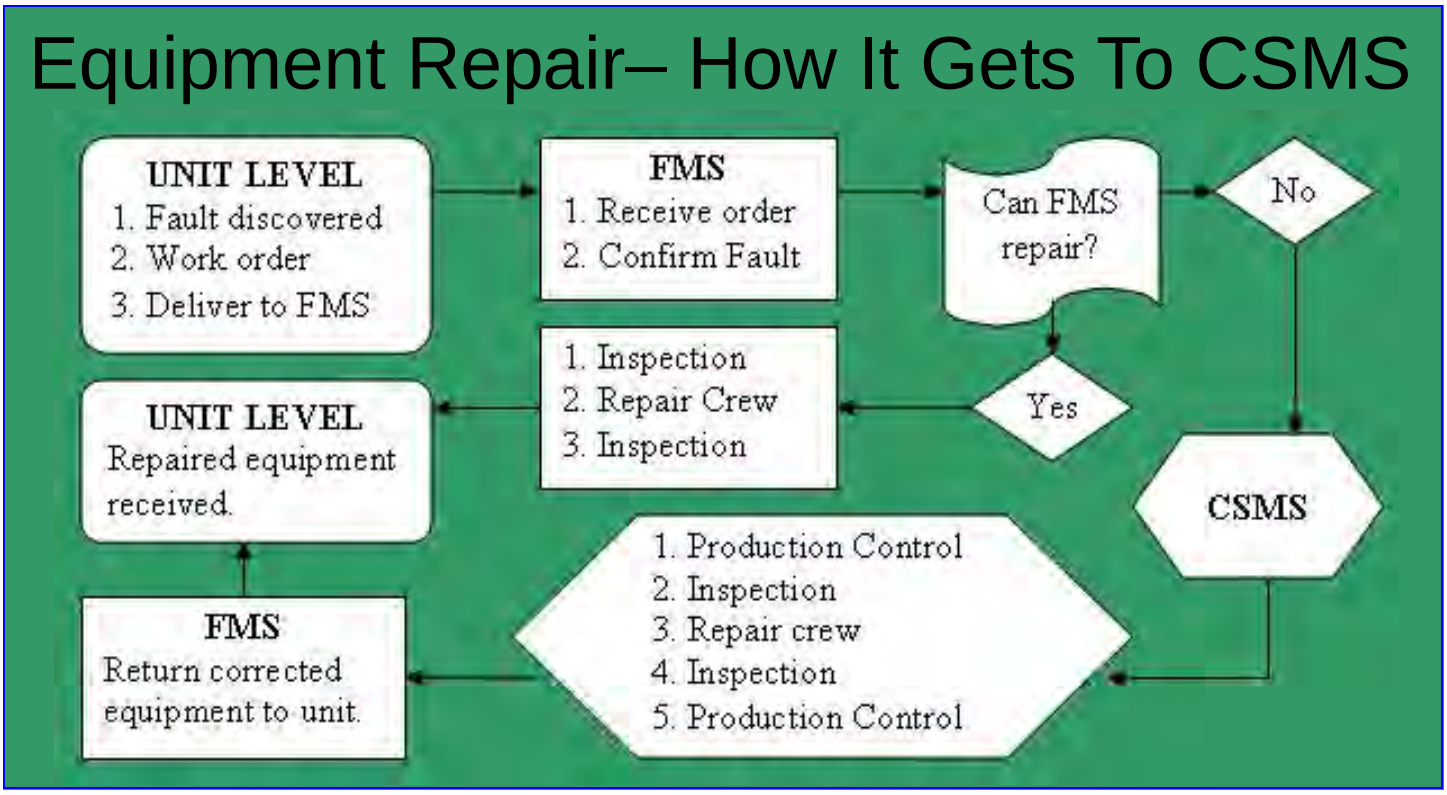
Coordinating the work orders, administrative duties, and communication with their FMSes, this team efficiently orchestrates the busy cycles of traffic and equipment control.

Quite simply, the crews manning unit maintenance shops work for the Soldier . From artillery and infantrymen to cooks and truck drivers, all servicemembers use equipment that will invariably require service. No unit would function were not for these dedicated support crews.

"The shop is a reflection of the Texas National Guard," said Maj. Cooper. "Its employees are responding to transformation, adapting, developing new operating procedures to face a new environment."

Opposite page left- Sgt. David L. Pierce, from CSMS #2, performs maintenance work on a piece of farm equipment.

Top right- Andrea L. Newby, an armament technician with CSMS #2, performs a service check on a newly repaired pistol.

Bottom right- Sgt. Hector T. Pinon, a maintenance technician with FMS #4, repairs a faulty vehicle piece

Below- Sgt. Pinon, works on an HMMWV.