

# THE ENGINEERING EDGE



## EDGEWOOD CHEMICAL BIOLOGICAL CENTER

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### Leadership Interview Series: Ron Pojunas

Ron Pojunas provides *The Edge* with a dynamic perspective on engineering in this month's issue. As the Edgewood Chemical Biological Center's (ECBC) Engineering Test Group (ETG) Leader, Mr. Pojunas shares insights about his diverse role in Engineering in this one-on-one interview.

**Engineering Edge:** How did you begin your career at ECBC?

**Ron Pojunas:** I started working here in 1987 with the Facilities Group in the Operations Directorate. I worked with this group for 10 years before I came to the Engineering Directorate. When I began working with Engineering I collaborated with a

number of teams, such as Advanced Design Manufacturing (ADM), Packaging, Pyrotechnics, and Specifications and Standards. I also did work on data management for the Business Management Group. Currently, I focus on the ETG. We have recently picked up a couple of teams, such as Protective Equipment and the Permeation and (Continued on page 2)



Ron Pojunas,  
Engineering Test  
Group Leader

### Engineering to Conduct Sixth Strategic Management Meeting



On 18 November 2009 from 1300-1600 hrs, the Engineering Directorate will conduct its sixth Strategic Management Meeting (SMM) as part of the implementation of the

Balanced Scorecard (BSC) program. The quarterly SMM provides a forum for the teams working on Engineering's BSC initiatives and metrics to present the status of their strategic objective or core

competency to the senior leadership, and receive feedback. Engineering uses the SMM to measure progress against the strategy, and guide continued BSC efforts. All members of the Engineering workforce are welcome to attend the SMM in the Berger Auditorium.

Visit the [Engineering Directorate BSC page](#) on the ECBC intranet and see other charts from prior SMMs, as well as other information about the Balanced Scorecard. If you want to learn more about the BSC in Engineering, please contact Ed Bowen (ext 5-4091). ⚙️

### Team Spotlight: Pyrotechnics

In this month's issue, Pyrotechnics Team leader Joe Domanico sits down for a one-on-one interview with *Engineering Edge* reporters. Domanico discusses a number of topics while also shedding some light on the dynamic, motivated and talented group of individuals that work on the Pyrotechnics Team.

**Engineering Edge:** As a member of the Pyrotechnics team, can you tell me about your specific role?

**Joe Domanico:** I have been a part of ECBC for 35

years. My official title is the Team Leader of Pyrotechnics. I deal primarily with the needs of outside customers, as this is a customer funded organization. I also do a lot of pyrotechnic related travel such (Continued on page 2)



## Leadership Interview Series: *Ron Pojunas*

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Analytical Solutions Team (PAST).

**EE:** Can you give me some background about your role at ECBC?

**RP:** As the group leader, I am responsible for the ETG. There are six teams within this group, including one senior team led by Eugene Vickers. Our teams do testing throughout the lifecycle, such as prequalification testing for technology and supplement developmental testing. We also complete testing with chemical warfare agents (CWAs), novel compounds, toxic industrial chemicals (TICs) and simulants. Additionally, the ETG provides environmental condition testing and field testing in support of the warfighter.

**EE:** What does a typical day look like for the leader of the ETG?

**RP:** I spend most of my time interfacing with both internal and external customers in the Engineering Directorate, the Directorate of Program Integration (DPI), the Directorate of Research and Technology (R&T), as well as other organizations within Engineering. It is my responsibility to make sure we provide the customer with the proper support by meeting their needs and desires. I also work with a number of test programs. Within these programs I am involved in risk mitigation issues, as well as the daily in and out planning of operations.

**EE:** What are some of your career highlights with ECBC? How have they shaped you into the leader you are today?

**RP:** One highlight for me was being involved in bringing the Military Construction Army (MCA) program online. Another highlight for me was when I was given the opportunity to do some novel compound work. This work was initiated approximately six years ago and has provided a number of opportunities for the ETG. Through this novel compound task, I was able to work on infrastructure and test methods development. This allowed me to collaborate closely  
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## Sabre Harper's HR Tip of the Month: *Enrolling in Benefits*



**Sabre Harper,**  
Engineering HR  
Representative

New employees can choose their benefits through the Army Benefits Center (ABC), including coverage for: Health Insurance, Life Insurance and Thrift Savings. Once complete, the employees must print out the confirmation sheet for their health insurance, as it will be your proof of insurance until the employee receives his/her cards in the mail. You can access the ABC at <https://www.abc.army.mil/>

## Team Spotlight: Pyrotechnics

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as my recent trip to the Netherlands.

**EE:** What is it like to be a member of the Pyrotechnics Team?

**JD:** Being a part of the Pyrotechnics Team is a 24-7 job, not a typical eight to five. Our team does a good amount of customer work; we are sort of a "private job shop." For example, at one point the Navy was having trouble using Army smoke devices because they had passed their shelf life. Our team took components from another system and designed a replacement system within a few weeks.

**EE:** What are some of the highlights that your team has experienced in the recent past?

**JD:** One highlight that was particularly interesting was the creation of a smoke grenade for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). These smoke grenades were used on F18 fighters at 30,000 feet in the air and ended up helping put the F18 back in service. Another highlight is that the XM106 was just recently type classified as an instant smoke grenade. Finally, we have replaced all of the dyes we have been utilizing so that they are less toxic and more environmentally friendly.

**EE:** While working on such a dynamic team, what kinds of skills are necessary to thrive on the Pyrotechnics Team?

**JD:** Team survival is a number one priority. As the Pyrotechnics Team is primarily customer funded, we live from year to year. Pyrotechnics is a self-directed team and our overall strategic plan requires a lot of advertising. As the team leader, I go to a number of conferences to give speeches and advertise our capabilities. Additionally, working on the Pyrotechnics team requires a lot of technical knowledge. Our breadth of necessary experience encompasses chemistry, physics, ballistics, aerodynamics, metal and wood working, among numerous other areas. While it is important to have the technical know-how, I also think it is important to be thick skinned because everyone makes mistakes. It is necessary to take your lumps and then learn from those mistakes rather than repeat them.

**EE:** What does a typical day look like for a member of the Pyrotechnics team?

**JD:** Chaos. Every day is different and comes with a number of tiny problems that need to be solved. Our team is what I like to call a "Coffee Cup" operational team. That means that if I need to solve a problem that is out of my reach and I know someone else who can fix it, all I need to do is make a phone call. In turn, when these  
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## Engineering Capability of the Month: Design



*Edgewood Chemical Biological Center designs solutions to meet Chemical Biological mission needs.*

ECBC engineers design products to protect the warfighter and first responders. The Advanced Design and Manufacturing (ADM) facility provides customers with design, analysis and prototyping services.

The facilities and personnel at ECBC are dedicated to the cradle-to-grave development and support of Chemical Biological (CB) defense products. ECBC engineering personnel design for life-cycle engineering's support, ensuring the accuracy of technical data (drawings, specifications and technical manuals).

In addition, engineering personnel redesign fielded items to meet new technical and operational challenges. Integrated design teams address all aspects of systems engineering to include maintainability, reliability and supportability.

## Team Spotlight: Pyrotechnics

(continued from page 2) same people need my expertise I am there to support them. My job specifically is two-fold. Initially, I work with the Ammunition Control Offices in Edgewood. All ammunition entering the center must pass through me, and I make sure that all ammunition is stored and handled safely. On the other hand, I am a team leader. Under this role I deal with a variety of manager functions, preliminary research work and administrative work.

**EE:** Outside of specific client needs, what other things is the Pyrotechnic team involved in?

**JD:** Our team represents ECBC for outreach efforts at non-chemical defense gatherings. For example, we were working on a program with Mary Doak, ECBC Program Outreach Director called, "Technology Needs Teens." During this program, we were able to demonstrate to kids how fun chemistry can be. Pyrotechnics is also part of a series of lectures at ECBC. Out of 10 different lectures, Pyrotechnics is responsible for giving a presentation on Trinitrotoluene, or TNT. This is one of many great opportunities that our team has been able to contribute to. ⚙️

## Security Tip of the Month: Reporting Derogatory Information

All employees are required to report credible derogatory information, as well as certain behavior or activities regarding themselves or their coworkers. These behaviors and activities include:



- Serious unlawful acts
- Indications of emotional, mental or personality disorders
- Unreported foreign travel
- Close and continuing relationship with non U.S. citizens
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Unexplained affluence or financial irresponsibility
- Willful violation of security regulations
- Coercion, blackmail or recruitment attempts
- Unauthorized disclosure or news leaks

Information is to be submitted to the Security Manager and will be treated as confidential. Failure to promptly and accurately report could result in revocation of an individual's security clearance. For more information contact Jeremy Taylor at extension 5-4548. ⚙️

## November is American Diabetes Month

This November, join the American Diabetes Association in a national movement to *Stop Diabetes*<sup>SM</sup>.



November is American Diabetes Month®—a time to shine a spotlight on a serious disease that leads to potentially life-threatening complications, such as heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, blindness and amputation.

This year, there must be a bolder, more audacious approach to American Diabetes Month.

Consider that:

- 24 million children and adults in the United States live with diabetes
- 57 million Americans are at risk for type 2 diabetes
- 1 out of every three children born today will face a future with diabetes if current trends continue

You can join the American Diabetes Association in launching a national movement to *Stop Diabetes*. This movement can help confront it, fight it and most importantly, stop it.

Learn how you can become involved:

- **Share.** Inspire others to join the movement by sharing your personal story. Beginning Nov. 2, visit <http://www.stopdiabetes.com> and join us on Facebook and Twitter to learn about all the exciting ways to be a part of the *Stop Diabetes* movement. Invite your family, friends and co-workers to join this effort as well.
- **Act.** Whether you want to walk, bike or simply tell a friend, there will be many ways to help us build momentum for the *Stop Diabetes* movement.
- **Learn.** The American Diabetes Association has many resources throughout the country to help *Stop Diabetes*. If you or a loved one already has diabetes or are at risk for developing it, we can provide medical, lifestyle and motivational information to prevent this disease from taking control of your life and the lives of those around you.
- **Give.** Sign up with your local American Diabetes Association office to help raise money for diabetes research, federal and state advocacy, and public education.

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## Leadership Interview: *Ron Pojunas*

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with R&T and the expertise of a number of world class scientists.

**EE:** What do you consider to be the most challenging aspects of your position? What have you done to overcome those challenges?

**RP:** A good amount of the challenges I deal with are relative to human resources or infrastructure issues, such as budgetary restraints and cost schedule performance. However, on a daily basis, I find challenges in performing the diverse hazardous operations. It is critical that the safety of those involved in work with the ETG is ensured.

In order to overcome this challenge I have attempted to develop a culture within the organization that accepts and thrives on improving the safety environment. I have developed a safety and health strategic plan to meet this challenge. Within this strategic plan we focus on being proactive, rather than reactive, to safety issues, as well as building relationships throughout the organization to foster this sentiment.

Another challenge that I deal with is creating an air of collaboration in the Chemical Biological (CB) community. I hope to forge these relationships because it is important to understand that this type of work cannot be done in a vacuum. It is extremely beneficial for all parties to be able to see what others can bring to the table.

Currently, we are in a better position than we were in the past because of the organizational structure, as well as the amount of people who are on board. There are various avenues for collaboration, even beyond efforts in the center with the private sector. My main goal is to get our face out in front more and to interact with the community. Management is extremely supportive of this goal.

**EE:** What are some of the most critical skills needed to succeed in the ETG?

**RP:** Organizational skills are critical. I also believe that one of the primary skills needed is the ability to interact with others. This includes interacting with management, other staff members and the client.

**EE:** What other advice would you offer to members of the Engineering workforce that want to advance within the organization?

**RP:** It is important that you plan your career. You can start doing this by establishing goals and identifying where you want to be down the road. By setting goals for your career you will give yourself a much better chance of reaching them. I also believe in taking advantage of any opportunity presented to you. You should always volunteer for any efforts. Finally, if you wish to do well in this environment you should build relationships. These relationships can last a lifetime, so they are worth the energy and effort. As you spend more time building the relationships you will find that you are always reaching back to those individuals for help. In order to be successful as an individual, a team, a directorate or a center, it must be a collaborative effort, and relationships are essential to collaboration. ⚙️

## Holiday Spirit Amplified by Food, Toy and Gift Drive

Family, friends, food and fun. During the holiday season gift giving and meal sharing become prominent activities for many. However, not all families are fortunate enough to partake in these wintry pastimes.

This winter the Edgewood Chemical Biological Center (ECBC) is holding their annual Food, Toy and Gift Drive from November 9<sup>th</sup> to December 9<sup>th</sup>. If you or your team would like to aid those in need you can help sponsor a local family from the Army Community Services.

Donations accepted during the drive include any non-perishable, unopened food items as well as gifts and toys

listed on sponsored family wish lists. To participate in this drive, donation boxes will be available across the APG South area. See the flyer posted in ECBC building for locations and points of



contact. For any questions or comments concerning the Food, Toy and Gift Drive please contact Leanne Chacon at extension x1430 or [leanne.argue.chacon@us.army.mil](mailto:leanne.argue.chacon@us.army.mil). ⚙️

## Your Thoughts Wanted!



This newsletter was published through the Engineering Directorate Balanced Scorecard. For article suggestions, questions or comments, please contact Ed Bowen at [ed.bowen@us.army.mil](mailto:ed.bowen@us.army.mil)."