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ATS Inspect

Case Study

DRS Laurel



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ATS Inspect Takes On Mission-Critical Challenges at DRS Laurel Technologies

Refurbishing any modern vehicle can be a daunting task. It becomes all the more so when the vehicle is a Bradley Fighting Vehicle, designed to take America's finest into harm's way. Yet this is the very challenge facing United States Department of Defense (DOD) manufacturer DRS Laurel Technologies in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, a division of DRS Technologies.

The Challenge

A long-time business partner and major defense contractor asked DRS Laurel Technologies to become an active partner in the DOD Bradley RESET program.

The program's mission is to refurbish and return Bradley Fighting Vehicles to active service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Under this arrangement DRS Laurel Technologies is responsible for inspecting, repairing and certifying over 100 different cables (wiring harnesses) located throughout the hull and turret of each vehicle.

These wiring harnesses support a host of systems including engine and vehicle controls, vision enhancement, target acquisition, battlefield position and tactical information.



A Bradley Attack Vehicle

Some of the specific challenges include:

- ▶ Eliminating communications breakdown with the factory floor.
- ▶ Accounting for and reconciling reassigned parts.
- ▶ Accurately identifying parts that need repair.
- ▶ Tracking repair information (what was repaired, or not repaired, who made the repair, when and where).
- ▶ Ensuring that the cables are packed in a specific order, in specific boxes.
- ▶ Providing instructions to maintain revision levels.
- ▶ Providing instructions for dealing with defects found on specific mission critical cables, or on cables that are too inexpensive to repair.

The ATS Inspect Solution

To meet the data-intensive challenges required by the RESET program, DRS Laurel Technologies implemented ATS Inspect visual inspection software.

"The system provides a major improvement in communication," said Bob Sewalish, DRS Laurel Technologies quality engineer. *"There is no question about what needs to be done. It's not like somebody putting a tag on a cable that says 'Do this list of things,' then having the tagged cable go down to the repair area, only to have the repair person ask, 'What did you mean by this? Where is that at? I cannot find this!' That does not happen. The*

communication part of the system is phenomenal."

At the heart of the system is a visual record for each cable processed. Here's how Inspect software is integrated into the wire harness refurbishment process.

Cable Prep. Cable prep begins with the initial vehicle teardown at a business partner's location. Cables are removed from a vehicle and crated, with that vehicle's serial number assigned to each crate and then delivered to the DSE work area. The DSE team member prints out a complete set of labels based on the vehicle's serial number. Then the process of cleaning the harness and attaching the appropriate label to each cable begins. The cables are scanned to record the vehicle's serial and cable numbers, initiating the visual record for that specific part.



Visual record is created

The data is transmitted to the DRS Laurel Technologies Johnstown facility server. The scanning is repeated by recording the receipt, cleaning and shipping information for each cable. Any remaining unused labels are then scanned and recorded as not received. Prior to shipment, there is a complete reconciliation of all the cables for that specific vehicle.

"If our partner says they delivered 98 cables to the DRS Laurel Technologies workstation, but we are only shipping 95, we need to account for those missing cables. The Inspect transactions record coupled with status and

shipping reports, helps us do just that," Sewalish said.

Incoming Receiving & Inspection.

The Johnstown receiving inspector opens the incoming container and scans each cable to display the visual record for the cable. The inspector uses this visual record to identify locations of needed repairs. The red markup flags indicate the repair needed at a specific location.

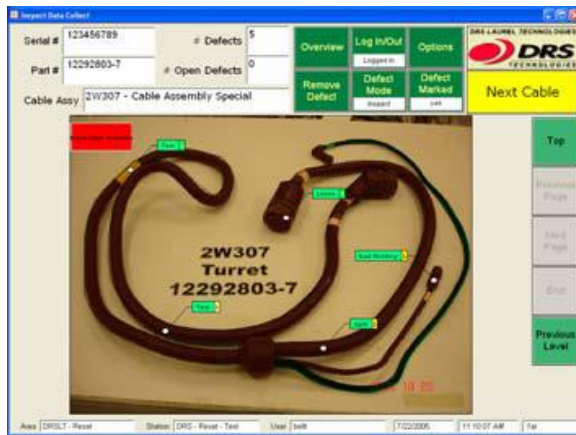


Red flags indicate repair locations

Once the inspection is complete and the visual image marked up, the inspector places the cable in a tote for routing. Cables requiring no repair move to the electrical test area. Cables to be repaired or scrapped are routed accordingly.

Scanning each cable confirms receipt and alerts the inspector if any unscheduled items are received. The inspector can also retrieve numerous reports to aid the reconciliation of the shipments between the partner's location and DRS Laurel Technologies' facilities.

Repair. Totes of inspected cables are rerouted to the desired station. Each cable is pulled from its tote and scanned to display the visual record. The team member makes the needed repair and notes the completion of the repair. Each green flag indicates a completed repair at that location.



Green flags indicate finished repairs

"With the visual image everything is highlighted that needs repair. It's all pictorial. Team members can look at the picture and compare it to the physical cable in their hand and know what to do with it.

When the repair is complete, they click it and mark it 'repaired.' Now we know who repaired it and when it was repaired. It's all recorded on a simple pictorial," Sewalish added.

Functional Electrical Test. Once again the team member takes a cable from a tote and scans the cable to pull up the visual record for that specific unit. The cable is tested and results noted. Cables are then routed to final inspection.

Final Inspection. The inspector scans the cable, reviews both the visual record and the physical cable, and completes the inspection. If the item passes, it moves to the shipment prep area. If the cable fails, it is either scrapped or additional repairs are noted on the visual record. The cables to be repaired or scrapped are routed accordingly.

Shipment Prep & Shipping. Once the cable passes final inspection it goes on to a holding rack, so it can be packed with other cables that make up a complete kit. The customer requires that the cables be packed in a specific order, in specific boxes. Once delivered, each box will make its way to a set location on the customer's production floor and the cable will be used in a specific order.

"When we go to pack the boxes again, we scan the cables for serial and part number information and also wand in the box number into the system. If a customer has a question about a cable, we can tell them the exact box we placed the cable in," Sewalish explains.



Cable data scanned to update info prior to shipping

Meets Special Requirements

This sequence shows how DRS Laurel Technologies uses the Inspect system to manage the refurbishment process. As with most projects there are special concerns or requirements that need to be addressed. Sewalish throws additional light on how the software addresses these areas:

"With Inspect special work instructions are embedded right on the screen. Instead of having people find and read a document, the things that are critical to a cable are right there on the screen. It's very visual and it's very simple. It tells you exactly what to do!"

Other Advantages

Here are some example of other ways Inspect has proven useful:

- ▶ Cables can go through multiple revisions because there is a lot variation from vehicle to vehicle. For example, a cable could be from a one-year-old vehicle or it could be from a 10-year-old vehicle. DRS has to make repairs as needed and certify the cables are as good as new and at the same revision level as new ones. In special cases, they take the old cable and move it up to the current rev level. Those instructions are simply embedded in the pictorial for those specific cables.



Repairs being made to a cable set

- ▶ There is also a class of cables considered “Mission Critical” where anything other than minor blemishes must not be repaired. Inspect identifies these cables to the operator. The system allows them to create a scrap list and send it to the customer. The customer has other programs where vehicles are being dismantled and scrapped. Sometimes needed cable can be salvaged from these vehicles, and if there are no cables to salvage, an order can be placed for new ones.
- ▶ Being able to reconcile shipments and product movement is critical to the success of the project. ATS Inspect keeps an account of everything DRS Laurel Technologies gets on a specific vehicle and what has happened to it. Nothing gets lost or goes unaccounted for.
- ▶ Scrapped cables are audited on a periodic basis. Records are reviewed to verify the cable has been recorded as scrapped and reviewed for any salvageable components.

Real-Time Quality Data

The system has over 70 reports that are viewable via any standard web browser. Reports such as these are just a few clicks away:

- ▶ Reports of repairs by rank and class for all cables or a specific cable
- ▶ Graphic Reports which summarize repairs visually
- ▶ Work load analysis by station
- ▶ Scrapped cable reports

- ▶ Reports to aid audit and reconciliation
- ▶ Vehicle Cable Kit Shipment reports

Benefits

The Inspect software proved a valuable tool for DRS Laurel Technologies’ stakeholders, from managers to repair staff. It has also helped to meet day-to-day challenges that arise. DRS Laurel Technologies’ Project Manager, Andy Fitzgerald, offers a real world example:

“I just got a call this morning from my customer, explaining they were seeing some nicks in portions of the cable from time to time and it was causing the wiring harness to short out. They went on to ask if we can put some additional sheathing over a specific portion of a cable. Sure, we can do that, but how do I convey that to each team member who will come in contact with that harness? If my staff relies on their memory you know that at some future date the request will fall through the cracks. With Inspect my Quality Engineer places a simple instruction box on the graphic each team member sees. That change means the request for additional sheathing has a much better chance of being done every time and we have a happy customer.”

“Inspect is a communication tool, not only to aid recording the incoming and final inspection, but also to allow repair personnel to click and confirm a specific repair is complete all the while using a simple graphic to communicate this information,” Fitzgerald adds.

DRS Laurel Technologies sees a bright future for the Inspect program and is currently investigating other possible applications for refurbishing programs and new production programs at the Johnstown facility.

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