

# ETHICS CORNER

## Business conduct officers share lessons learned with NASA

by Donna Davis, director of Ethics and Business Conduct

Twenty-five Business Conduct Officers (BCOs) from across the corporation gathered last month at the Integrated Systems Sector's (ISS) Melbourne, Florida site for annual advanced ethics officer training and to share best practices with NASA engineering and compliance staff at Kennedy Space Center. In a rare opportunity, BCOs not only participated in hands-on quality inspections of the Atlantis shuttle, they were fortunate to witness a shuttle Discovery launch.

"Although most of NASA's ethics cases involve safety issues, their processes are very similar to our own," remarked first-time participant Mike John, site operations manager and BCO for Huntsville Land Combat Systems.

NASA's quality and safety inspection process is extremely complex and because of life safety issues, even an unexplained bolt found lying on the floor would cause a delay of launch. In fact, this was exactly the case during the BCO visit. Launch of the 100th shuttle, Discovery, was delayed until the origin of a stray bolt was fully investigated.

NASA's business conduct program, like ours, centers on strong leadership and making the right decisions in the first place. Each employee is



BCOs gather under the belly of the shuttle Atlantis for a group photo after participating in a review of the thermal protection system tiles.

expected to assume accountability for the overall success of every mission.

NASA's chief investigator Albert "Red" May provided a backstage VIP tour of the Orbiter Processing and Vertical Assembly facilities, which included a first hand inspection of the shuttle Atlantis' thermal protection system—the heat shield tiles—and a review of improved waterproofing methods.

Having just returned from space, the Atlantis was undergoing a comprehensive integrity evaluation. "Quality of the heat shield tiles is critical since they must withstand extreme temperatures during re-entry," explained May. "A failure in shuttle performance can be catastrophic, as in 1986, when the Challenger crew and vehicle were lost

in an explosion that occurred 73 seconds after liftoff due to an O-ring failure." Investigator May also demonstrated environmental safety processes that preclude exposure to toxic and highly combustible chemicals normally emitted during shuttle take-off and landing.

BCOs gather each year at a central company location to hone their skills and plan program improvements. In addition to the NASA learning experience, this year's participants engaged in a variety of ethics-related workshops held at the Melbourne Joint STARS Integrated Test Facility. The workshops included: "Building an Ethics Program on Principles," presented by Dave Beard, ISS HR, "Pre-

serving Confidentiality and the Attorney-Client Privilege," by Corporate Counsel Kevin McCall, "Proliferating Ethics IT Shared Services," by Donna Davis, ES<sup>3</sup> Ethics, and "Ethics Stumpers," led by Carl Oliver of Corporate ethics.

"I appreciate the company providing this training experience," said Anne Dunphy, BCO for Park Air Electronics, Ltd., of Petersborough, England. "Coming together for quality training is surely an investment with great returns...but I must confess, experiencing the shuttle launch was the highlight of my trip. I will long treasure it."