

CONTINUED EDUCATION

By Jonathan Stack

You might have a bachelor's degree, master's degree or even a doctorate, but that doesn't mean your potential to learn or grow as a Defense Logistics Agency Energy employee is done.

"[Employees] that might be thinking about the senior executive service or any role in senior leadership it's important to keep thinking ahead and learning new things," said George Atwood, DLA Energy deputy commander. "Think of the future."

Even when an employee becomes a SES, they have to keep learning and diversifying.

"No matter what grade you are, and you might be comfortable where you are in your career, but don't let that stop you from keeping to strive to learn, train, broaden your perspective and broaden your net-

work," Atwood said.

Atwood said he wants to reinforce the importance of ongoing training.

"I would encourage employees to get with their supervisors to discuss different possibilities of training and further education that could help them in their careers," he said. "No matter what level you are, there are always different opportunities for further education."

Even as a SES, Atwood is finding ways to continue learning and growing as a federal employee and leader.

In 2015, he attended the Advanced Professional Executive Program, an executive orientation program to provide newly appointed SES members with practical and theoretical understandings of the Office of



the Secretary of Defense, combatant commands, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the military services.

The two-week program consists of a week in Washington, D.C., where participants meet with the senior leaders of the Defense Department, and a week visiting the COCOMs in the U.S., Atwood said.

"We received briefings from U.S. European Command, U.S. Pacific Command, the chiefs of staff of the Army and Air Force and the Joint Chiefs of Staff," he said. "We also had the secretary of defense speak to us about some big topics on the department's agenda."

The briefings gave the participants a good, broad perspective of different things going on in the department from a strategic level, Atwood added. It helped to prime them for what they need to think about within their respective roles as senior leaders.

Atwood said another good thing about this

course was it brings SESs from across the department together.

"So a part of the big piece is the network aspect of everything," he added. "We are meeting people that maybe day-to-day we don't really know or work with, but we learn from them and some of the experiences they're going through. In reality, most of the people I met I really had some things in common with and made some lasting contacts."

Atwood said it is important to develop a network people to help work through problems, solve things or just come up with ideas on how to handle certain situations.

"To me, that is one of the main things I took away from the course – those relationships and contacts," he said. "I think it broadens our knowledge and helps strengthen some of the decisions we are going to make or have to think about."

There were multiple things to take away from the program, and Atwood said one was everyone understanding their relevant military issuances, what authorities does their commands/agencies have and to be aware of them.

“That is important on how we operate to ensure we’re all working within our lanes,” he said.

Another thing Atwood took away from the program was a comment about how tactical events have strategic impacts.

“That talks about the importance of not losing sight of the day-to-day things going on because they do lead to things down the road that can cause either positive or negative outcomes and how we work through them,” he said.

Building networks and partnerships is something else Atwood said he stressed about the training opportunities.

“No matter what grade or position you have that’s important for us to think about,” he added.

It was a great opportunity to see and hear how DLA fits into the overall DoD perspective, Atwood said. Everything being done here at DLA and within DLA Energy is definitely in line with what senior leaders talked about

during the two weeks he visited and heard from them at the Pentagon and at the COCOMs.

“I think overall when went to the different sites and got to talk to the warfighters, the thing you take away when you walk around and see things is how do you make

things easier for them to their jobs, and what things can we do here to help,” Atwood said. “When you’re here in the building you don’t realize the true impact we have in making easier for our [servicemembers] to perform their mission.”

Atwood said talking to the warfighter made him think about the impact just the simple things, from a fuel perspective, has on them. On a ship they know the fuel is on specification, it is available when they need it and they have multiple options when at sea to get fuel – that is what employees should take away when they go out and see things.

“I think we all need to think about that when we come to work each day and know they know about DLA and the positive things we do for them, and how we are always striving to find ways to be more efficient so that money can go back to DoD and help with readiness ... that’s the thing I took away and one of the best parts of the program,” Atwood said. **ES**

