

## AFMC RELEASES ACCIDENT BOARD FINDINGS ON MCKINLEY CLIMATIC LABORATORY FIRE

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, OHIO-Contractor workers were performing structural repairs when a fire broke out on July 5, 2017 resulting in an estimated \$30 million in damage to an air-mixing facility at the McKinley Climatic Laboratory, located at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., according to a recently released Air Force Materiel Command Ground Accident Investigation Board report.

The Fort Walton Beach-based Reliance Test & Technology performs Operations and Maintenance services for the McKinley Climatic Lab as a prime contractor with the United States Air Force. At the time of the incident, a subcontractor, Universal Fabricators, Inc., was replacing heavily corroded structural I-beams to one of the two Air Makeup Units, which mix and condition temperature and humidity of air, which is then blown into the McKinley Climatic Lab to perform tests on aircraft and various equipment.

The report noted a contractor was using an oxy-acetylene torch to remove a corroded steel I-beam located in close proximity to coils which contained methylene chloride, commonly called R-30 refrigerant. Although stable at room temperature and pressure, R-30 can rupture or explode when exposed to heat.

The fire caused extensive damage to Air Makeup Unit I and an adjacent air handling unit. The fire was assessed to consume most of the approximately 4,000 gallons of refrigerant.

The McKinley Climatic Laboratory includes five testing chambers which can simulate various environmental conditions to evaluate the reliability of aircraft and other complex systems. The main environmental chamber is the largest in the world, capable of maintaining temperatures from -65 to 165 degrees Fahrenheit, and replicating snow, rain, wind and sand storm conditions.

The executive summary of the report is available at <http://www.afmc.af.mil>. For more information contact the AFMC Office of Public Affairs at 937-257-7648.