



Cold Weather Test Detachment

The original purpose of the testing facility was to ensure that all Army planes would function at -40 degrees F and below. With war raging in Europe and the Pacific there was a growing fear that the United States would be drawn into the conflict. If that happened it would need aircraft that could function at all temperatures. This point was driven home in the winter of 1941 when Hitler's invasion of Russia failed in part due to the effect of the extreme cold on the Germans' equipment, including their aircraft.

Cold Weather Test supported 20 or more different models of airplanes simultaneously. Each plane required technical support, parts, and detailed maintenance logs. Among the numerous difficulties encountered one of the detachment's largest challenges was getting hydraulics to work in subzero temperatures.

Testing wasn't only performed on airplanes. In December 1942, a test team bivouacked at an existing crash site near Ladd Field to field test the performance of airplane emergency kits. The team suggest that downed pilots in winter should heat both their mess kits and their utensils, or else "the food would become cold and the fork would freeze to the teeth."

