

## More on the origin of Murphy's law

I have just read Ronald W. Fiegert's letter in the December EA concerning the origin of Murphy's Law, a subject on which there has been a lot of recent press comment, most of it badly misinformed.

Mr Fiegert, at least, has got part of it right: the purpose of Murphy's Law was to encourage the design of equipment that could not be wrongly assembled. In its original form, Murphy's Law said simply, "If an aircraft part can be installed incorrectly, someone will install it that way". It was invented (c 1950) by a US Navy Chief Aviation Machinist's Mate named Murphy, but the whole idea behind it was to insist on foolproof

design practice and ferret out any examples that didn't meet these standards.

The Navy's safety office was so serious about it, in fact, that for a number of years they resisted all attempts to broaden the definition of the law and, at every chance they got, insisted the law meant only what it said. Anyone who is seriously interested in tracing Murphy's law to its source could start with such semi-official publications as Naval Aviation News, in which there were numerous references to it in the early 1950's.

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