

DIRECTOR OF THE NOAA CORPS

GUIDANCE TO 2010 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER OFFICER SELECTION

BOARDS

"There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things."

— Niccolo Machiavelli
The Prince (1532)

The world is changing rapidly and with it, we face new challenges and significant opportunities. NOAA Corps cannot wait to be prompted by external events and perceptions that dictate the terms of change to us. We must build a NOAA Corps that continually senses change and continually adapts. We must build leadership that will best position the Service for today and the future. Our officers must continually assess their skills and be engaged in lifelong learning regardless of rank or time in Service. Optimal mission execution requires much more than monitoring operations. Intelligence, curiosity to explore change, preparedness, and critical thinking skills are prerequisites to success. In addition, effective leadership goes beyond intelligence, technical expertise, and organizational knowledge. It requires a high degree of self-knowledge, emotional maturity, and interpersonal skills. We need officers who excel in this rapidly changing climate – leaders who employ innovative methods to solve problems; who work with partners within the government and their communities to best serve the American people; who understand the concept of managed risk; and who create an environment for all that embraces change, diversity of thinking, and NOAA Corps core values.

Our selection board system uses either a fully qualified or best-qualified standard for selecting officers. Selection boards are designed to select those officers meeting the appropriate standard without regard to their particular career paths. Officer Selection Boards are, in fact, creating the future of our Service. Our people above all else, have been the NOAA Corps' strength. Members of these boards are entrusted with the duty to ensure that our people continue to be our source of inspiration and excellence. The NOAA Corps and the Nation are depending on it.

1. The NOAA Corps today is highly visible, trusted, and respected both in and outside the agency. It is our agility, adaptability, and strong leadership that makes this possible. To sustain the public's confidence and our superior mission execution, while evolving to meet national, and even global demands, we need officers who can do the following:
 - a. Continually Reinforce Core Values. Character is a fundamental condition and represents a standard of excellence. Officers must consistently reflect the NOAA Corps core values of Honor, Respect, and Commitment. Core values provide a strong foundation for building leadership and professional competencies. Through

personal example every day, on and off duty, officers instill the culture of our core values in their people.

- b. Responsible and Accountable. In leadership roles, accountability is the acknowledgment and assumption of responsibility for actions, products, decisions, and policies and be answerable for resulting consequences. Responsible officers do what needs to be done, fulfill their obligations, are accountable for their actions, use good judgment and don't let people down. Responsible officers make choices that are right, rather than those that are easy.
- c. Develop Leadership Competencies. Leadership competencies are key organizational traits that all NOAA Corps officers shall seek to perfect during their careers. Leadership competencies are the core knowledge, skills and expertise NOAA's leaders must have to meet their mission responsibilities. As an officer progresses in his/her career, developing these leadership elements are key to success in the highly competitive promotion and assignment world.
- d. Strategic Execution. We need to promote people who have the necessary technical expertise, management, and leadership skills to bring the NOAA strategy to life in our operations, support, training, and workforce development, regardless of their mission. Officers you select for promotion must be our best leaders and managers capable of reacting and adapting to a dynamic operating environment and committed to igniting passion, motivation, and innovation in our people. They must ensure that all NOAA employees know their critical role in mission execution.
- e. Think Innovatively and Act with Conviction: When confronted with a crisis, our people do not hesitate to assess risk, develop a plan, and take swift and appropriate action. We must select officers who have this bias for action, who can think on their feet, and be innovative in solving problems. We need leaders who are team players, who exercise on-scene initiative and flexibility, and who can take and manage risk, while exercising appropriate restraint. Look for major accomplishments and discount minor errors. Officers should be out in front, even if their methods or ideas seem unconventional, as long as those methods comply with law, regulation, doctrine, and core values. Officers should also apply these principles to those who work with them, encouraging innovation, and helping their people apply the lessons learned for continuous systemic improvement.
- f. Be Capable of Operating in a Dynamic Environment: We are ready today, and always preparing for tomorrow. Officers must be adaptable and flexible to meet these evolving challenges and should demonstrate those traits in all that they do. They need to see opportunity in change, be able to readily adjust to changing circumstances, and lead with optimism and energy. Change is a permanent feature of our Service.
- g. Embrace Partnerships and Unity of Effort: We need officers who can operate and support operations in a linked and seamless fashion with partners, whether it is part of a major response to an event or in better serving the American public. We need

officers who know how to form key and successful partnerships and coordinate efforts with NOAA and DOC components; DOD; other federal, state, and local agencies; and the private sector. We value the experience gained in joint and interagency assignments when those experiences are applied to improve the NOAA Corps. We must also be effective in the face of organizational stovepipes and hesitant partners.

- h. Build the Future Workforce: To sustain superior mission performance and best position the NOAA Corps for the future, we need an extremely well-trained, educated and diverse workforce. Diversity is not limited to the traditional areas of ethnicity, gender, color, and creed. Diversity is also the diversity of thought, experience, perspective, and culture. We need officers to lead the NOAA Corps who value differences, who are culturally attuned to the world in which we operate and the people in it, and who teach and mentor their people. Our officers must also be firmly committed to equal treatment and opportunity for all, and through their actions, must promote diversity and foster cohesiveness and equal treatment in the workforce.

2. In addition to looking for those qualities I mentioned above, these are some of the things you should watch out for as you evaluate officers' records:

- a. Description of Duties: Given the changes in our organization over the past several years, many officers are serving in assignments that may not be fully understood solely by their titles. In your evaluation, ensure understanding of the full scope of the officers' duties and assignments; carefully review the "Description of Duties" block of the officers' OERs (block 2). You should pay close attention to the overall scope of authority and responsibilities for all positions, command and non-command, operations and support.

- b. Assignments:

- (1) Board members are reminded that while officers give input in their assignment process, ultimately, they are issued orders based on the needs of the Service. Boards should not base decisions on speculation as to why an officer was assigned to a certain billet or duty status.
- (2) The NOAA Corps' operational excellence requires an array of skills and expertise. Every community contributes to our overall success. Each community is essential and provides its own path to leadership and technical proficiency, though opportunities for command may come at different levels and numbers depending on the community. Boards should consider operational or command assignments in the context of the composition of the current fleet. All officers must go to sea or fly, without exception. The board must select the best for the job, and therefore the board members shall place the appropriate weight on the operational or command assignment, whether it is based upon past performance or for future consideration. However, staff experience shall be a consideration as an officer advances in rank because he/she must have the experience and knowledge to lead people, programs, and organizations.

c. Officer Evaluation Reports:

- (1) Numerous officers are serving throughout NOAA and interagency positions where they may have non-NOAA Corps supervisors. In reviewing performance for these officers, do not discount these records based upon the perception of unusually high or low marks or comments. Rather, consider the overall value these experiences bring to the NOAA Corps as we look to build our NOAA and inter-agency experience and talent. Reviewer comments are critical in these assignments.
- (2) Officers may be detailed to full time university or advanced/specialized training. While assigned to these duties, the majority of OERs will consist solely of their course grades. There will not be, nor is there expected to be, detailed performance information while assigned to duty under instruction.

3. Additional Considerations for the Board:

For Boards Considering Selection to O-4: By the time officers compete for promotion to LCDR, they are generally top performers. In addition to performing technical or specialized aspects of their assignments well, officers in the O-4 grade must demonstrate that they possess the leadership, management, and professional skills necessary to obtain optimal performance from people. Today, the environment in which the NOAA Corps operates is increasingly complex and technologically oriented. As officers move into senior ranks, they must have an understanding of the major issues facing the NOAA Corps as a whole in order to best contribute, through their particular expertise, to the overall needs of the Service. This understanding of macro Service issues can be acquired through assignment diversity (different type of unit/different type of billet/different geographic location), participation in studies and task forces, and special assignments which provide a more comprehensive understanding of issues important to our Service.

Because of the dramatically increased scope of authority and responsibility for O-4 positions, officers you select to serve in this grade must be able to make the leap from hands on management of the day-to-day details to empowering their people to perform those functions, while they take a strategic view, including a broad understanding of the interagency and even inter-governmental arenas. They must be capable of acting with vision in a complex and uncertain environment. They must have the ability to maintain our multi-mission effectiveness and functionality with the capability to make risk-based decisions under stressful circumstances. They must demonstrate the public acumen and capability to work cohesively with our NOAA, DOC, and interagency partners to optimize mission execution. They must understand how NOAA budgets and business systems impact operational outputs.