

# **Supervisor's Guide to NOAA Commissioned Officers**



Office of Marine and Aviation Operations  
Commissioned Personnel Center  
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## 1. BACKGROUND

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps (NOAA Corps) is an integral part of NOAA, and the smallest of the seven uniformed services of the United States. The original Corps worked almost exclusively in hydrographic and geodetic operations. The men and women of today's NOAA Corps operate ships, fly aircraft, lead mobile field parties, conduct diving operations, manage research projects, and serve in staff positions throughout NOAA and in other government agencies.

The heritage of the NOAA Corps can be traced to the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey which dates back to 1807 and President Thomas Jefferson. The Survey first used Navy officers for coastline surveying and Army officers for chorused surveying. Army and Navy officer were unavailable during the Civil War, so civilian assistants operated the ships and field parties. During the Spanish-American War, Navy officers were withdrawn, never to return. Their commands reverted to civilian assistants, who carried on field activities until 1917. A military personnel system was established by the Act of May 22, 1917, to meet the Survey's unique needs. This act created a new uniformed service of commissioned officers and authorized a transfer to the military in time of national emergency.

In 1970, NOAA was created to develop a coordinated approach to oceanographic and atmospheric research. Subsequent legislation converted the commissioned officer corps to the NOAA Corps. The new NOAA Corps was designed to provide a pool of professionals for remote, hazardous, or otherwise arduous duties, frequently on short notice. Officers are trained in the sciences, mathematics, and engineering and serve in Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO) and all of NOAA's line offices.

The NOAA Corps mission is to provide officers technically competent to assume positions of leadership and command in NOAA and Department of Commerce (DOC) programs and in the Armed Forces during times of war or national emergency.

Discipline and flexibility are inherent in the NOAA Corps personnel system. Officers are trained for positions of leadership and command in the operation of ships and aircraft; in the conduct of field projects on land, at and under the sea, and in the air; in the management of NOAA observational and support facilities; as members or leaders of research efforts; and in the management of various organizational elements throughout NOAA.

## 2. CORE VALUES

Core values serve as the officer's road map and set the standard for behavior. They serve to remind the officer of the importance of the profession they have chosen, the oath they took, and the demands placed upon them as members of a uniformed service. Because officers represent NOAA to the public, they must embrace these values in their professional undertakings as well as in their personal lives. As a supervisor, you are one of the key players in ensuring the officer maintains these standards at all times. A description of each core value is shown below.

**Honor:** Abide by an uncompromising code of integrity. We will conduct ourselves in the highest ethical manner in all relationships. We will take responsibility for our actions and be accountable for our professional and personal behavior. We will do what is right at all times.

**Respect:** Commit to treat each individual with human dignity. We will value inclusiveness and tolerance, respecting diversity of expression while maintaining unity of purpose. We will cultivate an environment where all can excel.

**Commitment:** Commit and dedicate ourselves to the Nation and NOAA. We will serve our Nation effectively and efficiently with knowledge, skill, loyalty, and perseverance. We will be mindful of the resources entrusted to us and will ensure they are used in an honest, careful, and efficient way.

### **3. SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Effectively use the officer performance management process
- Establish clear expectations for the assigned officer(s)
- Provide honest and timely feedback - both formal and informal
- Support the officer's growth and development
- Recognize and reward desired performance and correct undesirable performance
- Remain focused on helping employees to succeed
- Provide leadership to officers and help create a supportive performance management culture
- Be fair, reasonable, accountable, consistent, and timely in your interactions with the assigned officer(s)
- Communicate honestly and directly
- Follow the organization's policies, procedures and guidelines for governing the NOAA Corps
- Ensure the officers adhere to their core values
- Ask the Commissioned Personnel Center for assistance when needed

### **4. COMMISSIONED PERSONNEL CENTER**

The NOAA Corps Commissioned Personnel Center (CPC) manages all aspects of the NOAA Corps personnel system. This includes officer recruitment, training, assignments, travel, transportation, career development, payroll, health care, records maintenance, and all routine and special personnel actions. CPC is located within OMAO and is responsible for allocating officer resources to render maximum service to NOAA program users.

CPC personnel can provide specialized guidance about every aspect of the NOAA Corps human resources system. The CPC staff exists to assist officers, supervisors and line offices to help make the best use of each officer and the personnel system in general.

**PLEASE CONTACT CPC WHENEVER QUESTIONS CONCERNING NOAA CORPS OFFICERS ARISE.** A CPC telephone directory and organization chart are provided on the CPC website at <http://www.corpscpc.noaa.gov/contacts/directory.html>.

## 5. NOAA CORPS DIRECTIVES

The NOAA Corps Directives (NCD) govern all aspects of a NOAA Corps officer's career. They are established and issued in accordance with authority delegated by the Secretary of Commerce to the Director, NOAA Corps.

Chapters include:

- Administration
- Entitlements
- Health and Medical Care
- Career Development and Promotion
- Assignments
- Leave and Liberty
- Discipline
- Termination of Active Service
- Voting and Political Activities
- Advisory Boards
- Casualties and Decedent Affairs
- Uniforms and Awards
- Equal Employment Opportunity
- Special Provisions in Effect During Time of War or National Emergency
- Recall of NOAA Corps Officers on the Retired List to Active Duty

The Directives can be found at <http://www.corpscpc.noaa.gov/procedures/directives.html>. CPC staff is always available to address any questions related to these Directives.

Updates and changes are posted on the CPC website. Officers are notified of changes to the Directives via the CPC biweekly electronic newsletter, CPC CyberFlash. **It is the responsibility of each NOAA Corps officer to familiarize themselves with the Directives to ensure they are in compliance at all times..**

## 6. ASSIGNMENTS

The NOAA Corps assignment process is designed to emphasize career development and incorporate input from senior managers. Regulations and procedures concerning officer assignments are contained in Chapter 5. The Assignment Coordinator works closely with the Officer Assignment Board (OAB) to determine officer assignments.

The OAB members also serve as the NOAA Line Office Liaisons and are assigned to positions with access to senior NOAA management. They work closely with senior managers to help identify billets to be filled. Managers should contact the appropriate liaison officer for specific officer assignment information.

A list of current NOAA Corps Liaisons may be found at <http://www.corpscpc.noaa.gov/careermgmt/pdf/liaisonlist.pdf>

## 7. OFFICER EVALUATION SYSTEM

Officer Evaluation Reports (OER) are an essential element for giving officers feedback on performance and providing personnel boards information for decisions on promotion, assignments, and career development. All officers must be familiar with the responsibilities and requirements in the Officer Evaluation System Directive [http://www.corpscpc.noaa.gov/procedures/persmanual/ncch10\\_pm.pdf](http://www.corpscpc.noaa.gov/procedures/persmanual/ncch10_pm.pdf).

Supervisors must ensure accurate, fair, and objective evaluations are provided to all officers assigned to them. To that end, performance evaluation forms have been made as objective as possible within the scope of jobs and tasks performed by officers. In using the Officer Evaluation Report, NOAA Form 56-6A, strict and conscientious adherence to specific wording of the standards is essential to realizing the purpose of the evaluation system.

Individual officers are responsible for managing their performance. This responsibility entails determining job expectations, obtaining sufficient performance feedback, and using that information to meet or exceed standards. While each officer is ultimately responsible for his or her own performance, it is imperative that supervisors provide adequate performance feedback. Performance feedback should be given and issues should be addressed as they occur so proper guidance may be given and/or corrective action taken early to ensure the standards of performance are maintained.

CPC reviews OERs for compliance with Directives and consistencies between numerical scores and written comments. The NOAA Corps Officer Evaluation System (OES) has been designed to:

- Provide information for important personnel management decisions. Especially significant among these decisions are promotions, assignments, and career development.
- Set performance and character standards to evaluate each officer.
- Prescribe organization values by which each NOAA Corps officer can be described.
- Provide a means of feedback to determine how well an officer is measuring up to the standards.

Officer Evaluation Report (NOAA Form 56-6A) and Reviewer's Comments (NOAA Form 56-6B) shall be submitted by each officer's rating chain. Forms can be located on the CPC site at <http://www.corpscpc.noaa.gov/forms/index.html>.

The intent of the submission schedule is for officers with an annual or semiannual reporting period to be evaluated as closely to those frequencies as possible. While every effort has been made to accommodate possible deviations to the schedule, unusual circumstances may dictate the submission of reports, or not allow their submission, which may be contrary to the intent of the OES.

<b>GRADE</b>	<b>MONTH</b>
Captain	October 31
Commander	October 31
Lieutenant Commander	November 30
Lieutenant	November 30
Lieutenant (Junior Grade)	January 31 and July 31
Ensign	January 31 and July 31

Supervisors are strongly encouraged to contact Chief, OCMD with any questions they have pertaining to OERs. [chief.careermgmt.cpc@noaa.gov](mailto:chief.careermgmt.cpc@noaa.gov), 301-713-7748.

## **8. PROMOTIONS**

The promotion process for an officer is completely different from the civilian process. Officers must compete on a best qualified basis against other officers. Fundamental to selecting for promotion on a best-qualified basis is the fact that the number of officers to be selected is fewer than the number being considered. Therefore, some officers will not be selected for promotion. Officers not selected by a promotion board will be considered by the next board. If the second board does not select them for promotion, the officer will normally be separated or retired from the NOAA Corps. An important point to make is that most promotion boards consider officers' records, comparing past performance, their capacity to successfully undertake tasks of progressively greater difficulty involving broader responsibilities, their capability and their potential to perform creditably those duties to which these officers might be assigned in the next higher grade. Please keep this in mind as you are evaluating the officers assigned to you.

## **9. COLLATERAL DUTIES**

At times officers will be required to perform collateral duties, which may not be directly associated with their current position. These duties can include serving on various NOAA Corps personnel boards which make recommendations for the accession of new officers, selection of officers for promotion and disciplinary action.

## **10. AWARDS**

Officers who perform exceptionally well may be recognized with DOC and NOAA awards. The most common awards are NOAA Corps Director's Ribbon, NOAA Corps Achievement Medal, and NOAA Corps Commendation Medal. Eligibility requirements and nomination procedures for these awards are outlined in NCD, Chapter 12, Part 7. A summary of the awards process is also on the CPC site at [http://www.corpscpc.noaa.gov/procedures/pdf/how\\_to\\_awards.pdf](http://www.corpscpc.noaa.gov/procedures/pdf/how_to_awards.pdf).

These awards may be given for sustained superior performance, generally expected to cover a period of at least a year, or special acts. Nominations should be made promptly using the Recommendation for Award, NOAA Form 56-63. In accordance with NCD, Chapter 12, Part 7, CPC requires submission of nominations within 120 days of a special act or end of sustained rating period. When an officer receives an end-of-tour award and is transferred, the award package will be sent to the officer's new duty station, with a copy of the transmittal memorandum to the nominating authority.

Only one award may be made for a particular act or period of time. For example, if an officer is given a NOAA Corps Achievement Medal for sustained superior performance for a year of a tour of duty, he/she may not be given a Commendation Medal to recognize the entire tour. Please contact CPC for more information.

## 11. LEAVE AND LIBERTY

Leave, liberty, and administrative absence policy is based on the policies of the Armed Forces. NCD Chapter 6 provides the policies governing leave and liberty. NOAA Corps officer's Request and Authorization for Leave Form (NOAA Form 56-12) is used for requesting and authorizing all regular leave, emergency leave, sick leave, and special liberty.

Officers are on call 24 hours per day, 365 days a year, and must be reachable by the supervisor at any time. An officer on leave is to carry the original approved leave slip at all times. The leave granting authority (supervisor) will keep a copy of the completed slip. Upon return, the leave granting authority is to complete block 13, 14 (if necessary), and 15, certifying leave taken. Upon completion of leave, the officer ensures the original leave request is submitted within five days to the NOAA Corps Payroll Unit.

Sick leave is not charged to the leave account. However, use of sick leave is tracked by CPC. Approved leave slips must be sent in to CPC to document all periods of sick leave.

Officers may carry no more than 60 days accumulated leave from one fiscal year to the next. Accumulated leave greater than 60 days will be lost on October 1. Supervisors should encourage officers to take enough leave to avoid loss. Block 8a, Accrued Leave Balance, is a tracking tool. Contact CPC with specific questions on leave administration.

## 12. TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION

NOAA Corps officers are subject to the sections pertaining to uniformed members in the Joint Travel Regulations (JTR). When officers are required to perform temporary duty (TDY) away from their duty stations (outside of the local commuting area), they must be under orders issued by the appropriate authority. Officers' TDY orders must be written using the current NOAA travel order issuing system.

## 13. DISCIPLINE

NOAA Corps officers are held to standards of conduct described in the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, Department of Commerce's Standards of Conduct, NOAA Administrative Orders, and NOAA Corps Directives. NCD Chapter 7 covers disciplinary authority, measures, and procedures. Disciplinary action may be taken where other administrative measures are considered inadequate or inappropriate and more stringent measures are required to correct, educate, and reform an offending officer or deter others from similar conduct.

**Note: OER's are NOT an appropriate forum for addressing misconduct. The OER is to be used to rate performance only.**

The rating supervisor is the primary disciplinary authority, and may administer informal disciplinary measures including oral admonishment, letter of administrative censure (kept by the supervisor; not entered into the officer's Official Personnel File (OPF)), or letter of reproof (shall become a part of the officer's OPF, but shall be automatically removed from the OPF no later than three years from the date of its addition to the OPF). In administering discipline, care must be taken to ensure due process and respect the rights of the officer involved.

More stringent measures require action by a Flag Officer in command. If the supervisor believes his/her authority may be insufficient to properly dispose of the matter, the issue shall be referred up the chain of



command for disposition. The Flag Officer in command of officers assigned to headquarters or line offices is the Director, NC. For those officers assigned to Marine Operations Center or Aircraft Operations Center, the Flag Officer in command is the Deputy Director for Operations, OMAO.

Please contact CPC for guidance.

#### **14. PART-TIME UNIVERSITY TRAINING**

NOAA Corps officers are encouraged to pursue career-developing education to promote job satisfaction, ensure responsive service, and enhance promotion potential. If an officer's work schedule will accommodate part-time university training, supervisors are invited to support an officer's educational development.

Eligibility requirements and request procedures for part-time university training are outlined in NCD, Chapter 4, Part 1.

#### **15. OFFICERS LEAVING THE NOAA CORPS**

NOAA Corps officers leaving active-duty service, as a result of separation or retirement, are required to comply with the Administrative Requirements listed in NCD Chapter 8. Supervisors should ensure the officer has complied with the particulars of this regulation.

#### **16. CPC SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE**

NOAA Corps officers are a very important asset to NOAA and the Nation. Your help in developing the future leaders of the NOAA Corps and NOAA is greatly appreciated. The Commissioned Personnel Center stands ready to assist you. Questions should be directed to the appropriate CPC source of assistance. The CPC Directory is available at <http://www.corpscpc.noaa.gov/contacts/directory.html>.

**The Chief, Officer Career Management Division (OCMD), is always available to answer questions. Supervisors are encouraged to contact Chief, OCMD, at the beginning of an officer's assignment to arrange a meeting and discuss all of these issues in depth.**

**[chief.careermgmt.cpc@noaa.gov](mailto:chief.careermgmt.cpc@noaa.gov)  
301-713-7748**