

NOAA Corps How To: Apply to become a NOAA Aviator

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Question: How do I apply to become a NOAA Aviator?

Background: This document details the process by which current NOAA Corps officers can apply to become NOAA Aviators. This document does not apply to direct-to-aviation officer candidates or Interservice Transfers from other uniformed services. Typically, solicitations for applications occur when there is a Service need, at least every one to two years. Additional requests may be sent out when there is a need due to unscheduled vacancies. Officers selected to be aviators who do not possess an FAA pilot license with commercial multi-engine rating should expect to attend training in Vero Beach, FL for up to 12 months. Duration of training is dependent on weather and prior flight experience.

Officers are expected to sign a 6-year service agreement before the start of training. This obligation will begin after completion of flight training. Flight training is followed by a 5-year operational flight assignment out of Aircraft Operations Center (AOC) in Lakeland, FL. All officers selected for aviation should expect to be assigned to either the Twin Otter or the King Air. NOAA Corps officers are almost never eligible to be selected directly for P-3 or G-IV aircraft ("heavy aircraft") as an initial platform. Selection and assignment to the P-3 or G-IV aircraft occurs via a Heavy Aircraft Board, generally either during or after an initial operational flight assignment.

References:

[09 June 2023 Cyberflash](#) The Cyberflash sent by the Director, NOAA Corps Commissioned Personnel Center on 09 June 2023, details the requirements for the NOAA Corps Aviator Selection Process. For those officers interested in the program, flight experience is encouraged, but is not required.

Summary of the Flight Selection Process:

1. Director, Commissioned Personnel Center (CPC) sends out a call for applications.
2. Interested applicants prepare and submit Application Package.
3. Completed Application Packages must arrive at CPC by the close of business on the date listed in the announcement.
4. The Aircraft Operations Center (AOC) is responsible for conducting interviews for all applicants who meet the basic requirements. Once the interview process is complete, AOC forwards the interview results to CPC.
5. An Officer Personnel Board (OPB) is convened to select the best qualified officers for initial flight training.
6. Start dates for flight training are then determined based on the needs of the Service.

Application Package Requirements:

1. **Complete all sections of [NOAA Form 56-43: Application for NOAA Corps Aviation Program](#).**
2. **Complete a United States Coast Guard (USCG) Class I Flight Physical**
NOAA Corps pilots follow the same medical requirements as the USCG. The USCG Class I Flight Physical must be conducted and signed by a military flight surgeon.

How to Schedule: Call your nearest Military Treatment Facility (MTF) and/or your Primary Care Manager (PCM). Ask if they have the ability to perform Military Flight Physicals, or if they know where to locate the nearest MTF with a flight surgeon. You may need a referral from your PCM to receive services at another facility. Class I Flight Physicals can typically be performed at any USCG Air Station Medical Clinic, or any MTF located on a base with aviation units.

3. Complete the Air Force Officer Qualifying Test (AFOQT) and Test of Basic Aviation Skills (TBAS) to obtain a Pilot Candidate Selection Method (PCSM) score*

How to Schedule: Identify the closest USAF/Space Force base and contact their Education Office. Alternatively, search for the nearest USAF ROTC campus and contact their education office. You do not need to begin an application to join the USAF in order to take the tests. Avoid USAF recruiting offices to schedule tests if possible. When you fill out information at the AFOQT testing site, you will notice an “other” option for reasons to take the test. The AFOQT can only be taken twice, and the TBAS only 3 times. Refer to <https://access.afpc.af.mil/pcsmdmz/index.html> for TBAS info and testing locations.

*This requirement is waived if the applicant possesses an FAA Commercial Multi-Engine License Instrument Rating or is a military aviator transfer. Confirm with Chief, Admin Branch of AOC and NOAA Corps Recruiting Branch.

4. A recommendation for aviation selection must be included in Section 10 (Potential) of the applicant's Officer Evaluation Report [NOAA Form 56-6A](#) or Section 11 on [NOAA Form 56-6E](#). Discuss your interest and potential for becoming a NOAA Corps Aviator with your current command. If they agree and see the potential, your supervisor or reporting officer must make note of it in your OER. A Special OER is not recommended to fill this need. Therefore, while preparing accomplishments for your supervisor to prepare your OER, remind your chain of command that you are interested in becoming a NOAA Corps Aviator.

Aviation Package Checklist:

- NOAA Form 56-43: Application for NOAA Corps Aviation Program – completed and signed
- USCG Class I Flight Physical – completed with form signed by a military flight surgeon
- U.S. Air Force Officer Qualifying Test (AFOQT) – completed with score posted
- U.S. Air Force Test of Basic Aviation Skills (TBAS) – usually must be completed after AFOQT, the two test results combined generate the Pilot Candidate Selection Method (PCSM) score – completed and score posted
- Recommendation for flight program in Section 10 of OER or separate written endorsement from current supervisor/reporting officer

Points of Contact:

Chief, Officer Assignment Branch, Commissioned Personnel Center - assignmentbranch.cpc@noaa.gov

Chief, Administrative Branch, Aircraft Operations Center - aoc.chiefadmin@noaa.gov

Director, Aviation Medicine, Aircraft Operations Center - CAPT Joseph Newcomb, joseph.newcomb@noaa.gov