

U.S. Department  
of Transportation

United States  
Coast Guard



Commandant  
United States Coast Guard

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COMDTINST 1610.1  
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## COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 1610.1

Subj: Hazing Awareness Training

1. PURPOSE. This Instruction promulgates the Coast Guard's Hazing Policy and provides guidance to ensure that all personnel are aware of their responsibilities to ensure that incidents of hazing do not occur. It defines the actions to be taken if an incident of hazing is observed and it also illustrates the serious adverse impact of hazing on organizational effectiveness.
2. DISCUSSION. Research to determine the magnitude of the Coast Guard's hazing problem has been conducted. A survey of Class "A" School students indicates that hazing (to various degrees) is a more common practice in the Coast Guard than we can accept, particularly on board floating units. The adverse impact of hazing on the victims and the organization is significant. Although most incidents of hazing are not severe, they are detrimental to the accomplishment of the missions of the Coast Guard. The means to hold hazing perpetrators accountable are available, but a clear and specific policy against hazing was missing. This Instruction defines the Coast Guard's policy on hazing and provides a point of contact for obtaining training materials to be used at the unit level.

3. COMDTINST 1610.1 3. PROCEDURES

- a. The Superintendent, U. S. Coast Guard Academy and Commanding Officers of Training Center Cape May and Reserve Training Center Yorktown shall incorporate hazing awareness training into existing recruit and leadership training curriculums for all new personnel.
- b. The Superintendent, U. S. Coast Guard Academy and the Commanding Officer Training Center Petaluma shall incorporate hazing awareness training into the Prospective Commanding Officer/Executive Officer Course, the Chief Petty Officer Academy, and the Officer in Charge/Executive Petty Officer Course, and the Officer and Senior Petty Officer Leadership and Management Courses.
- c. Area and district commanders, commanders of maintenance and logistics commands, unit commanding officers and officers in charge, and Commander, Activities Europe shall ensure all assigned personnel have completed one time Hazing Awareness Training, however, commanders are encouraged to incorporate the training into the annual unit training schedule. Materials needed to conduct Hazing Awareness Training may be obtained by contacting the Leadership & Management School at Training Center Petaluma.
- d. Persons believing that they are victims of hazing or persons observing or having knowledge of acts, or instances of hazing have the obligation to bring the facts to the immediate attention of the appropriate authority within the chain of command. Notification may also be made directly to the Command Enlisted Advisor or another command representative.
- e. Commanding officers receiving complaints of, or information concerning hazing have a responsibility to investigate and to take prompt effective action. In dealing with hazing, commands have a wide variety of procedures available, depending on the specific circumstances of the incident. One function of command, and a challenge to that command's leadership capabilities, is to fit the appropriate command response to each particular situation. Available remedies range from counselling to administrative discharge proceedings. Additionally, specific acts of 2

3. e. (cont'd) hazing and/or the result of a hazing incident may be punishable under various provisions of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). SPECIFICALLY:
    - (1) Article 92, UCMJ, prohibits disobedience of orders and regulations and dereliction of duty.
    - (2) Article 93, UCMJ, prohibits cruelty and maltreatment of a person subject to the orders of another. This offense includes sexual harassment. It carries a maximum punishment of a Dishonorable Discharge, total forfeitures of pay and allowances and one year of confinement. (3) Article 128, UCMJ, prohibits assault.
    - (3) Article 134, UCMJ, prohibits any conduct which is prejudicial to good order and discipline, and includes indecent language and indecent acts. Any other conduct which would degrade, humiliate, oppress, etc., could fall under this Article.
    - (4) Article 138, UCMJ, permits any member to submit a complaint against their commanding officer (CO) whenever that person feels he/she has been wronged by the CO.
  - f. Hazing constitutes military misconduct, and its prevention is an all hands responsibility. Victims and casual observers shall report all violations of this policy. There is no place in the Coast Guard for dehumanizing treatment, and any incident of hazing shall be investigated and appropriate disciplinary action initiated against the perpetrators, including those in the chain of command who tacitly condone such practices, either by their inaction or by neglecting to investigate reported suspected incidents.
4. ACTION. Area and district commanders, commanders of maintenance and logistics commands, unit commanding officers and Commander, CG Activities Europe shall ensure that this Instruction is given the widest dissemination to commands under their cognizance.

/s/ G. D. PASSMORE  
Chief, Office of personnel and Training

Encl: (1) Hazing Policy Statement  
(2) Discussion Questions

U.S. COAST GUARD  
HAZING POLICY STATEMENT

The practice of hazing will not be tolerated in the U.S. Coast Guard. Aside from serving no useful purpose, the demeaning and abusive activities associated with hazing inhibit performance, debase personal dignity, and can result in serious injury. To prevent it, we must develop an awareness of what constitutes hazing and understand the negative impact of such activities.

Although a general definition is difficult to provide it typically occurs in connection with various impromptu and unsupervised "initiations" and is the result of the erroneous perception that the event gives license to subject an individual to personal abuse. Examples include: tacking on of crowns, throwing personnel over the side from a ship or pier, application of grease, oil, or other noxious substances on a member's body, forcing consumption or encouragement to consume excessive quantities of alcohol, shaving of heads or removal of body hair, offensive hitting, slapping or touching another individual and any other action which subjects an individual to ridicule or embarrassment.

Some incidents of hazing have been condoned as unit initiations or innocent jest without intent to harm. Although the actions or verbal harassment may be considered humorous by some observers, they often create a real fear in the minds of the victims. Further, they undermine the very morale and "Esprit de Corps" they purport to advance.

Traditional service "initiation ceremonies," including Chief Petty Officer and crossing the equator, dateline, Arctic and Antarctic Circle initiations are authorized. However, Commanding Officers shall ensure these events do not include any degradation of character, sexual overtones, bodily harm or undue harassment.

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Our success as an organization very much depends on our people. A healthy, positive and professional work environment is essential to enable each of us to contribute. Strong support of this policy will help us maintain such an environment.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Q1 Why is the Coast Guard placing such great emphasis on the prevention of hazing?

ANS The severe nature of the incidents described in enclosure (2) helped bring this issue to the forefront. When initial inquiries regarding the magnitude of the Servicewide problem were made, the prevailing opinion of most Coast Guard members was that hazing was not a widespread problem and that these were just isolated incidents. However, further research revealed that hazing was more widespread than initially believed. The Hazing Policy Statement (enclosure (1)) was developed to make our personnel aware of the problem and its consequences.

Q2 Why does the Coast Guard still allow chief's initiations? Don't chief's initiations expose people to indignity and humiliation?

ANS Chief's initiations are OPTIONAL for those individuals who WILLINGLY participate, and are conducted by experienced personnel with extensive service and a clear understanding of Service norms, morals, values, and respect for individual dignity. Both the individual and those conducting the initiation know the purpose and meaning of the "rite of passage to chief." It is a non-threatening experience. Once the initiation is completed, all participants dress in their uniform for a formal presentation, reading of the Chief Petty Officer's Creed, and pinning on of rank devices. The Creed and final stages of the initiation enhance individual self-esteem and explain why the indignities were imposed upon the initiatee. These initiations are attended by command leadership personnel who are totally responsible for ensuring that there is no degradation of character, sexual overtones, bodily harm or undue harassment.

Q3 Why does the Coast Guard still allow crossing the equator, dateline, Arctic and Antarctic Circle initiations? Don't they include physical contact and actions which can be degrading and humiliating?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

ANS These initiations are command sponsored and attended by command leaders who are totally responsible for ensuring that the initiations do not include any degradation of character, sexual overtones, bodily harm or undue harassment. This seagoing tradition is also voluntary for the initiatee, international in character, and of long standing duration. At the conclusion of the initiation, a ceremony is held and certificates presented to those who were initiated.

Q4 Events like "tacking on crows" and throwing members over the side on promotion are Service traditions and are relatively harmless. Why not allow them?

ANS These types of events were banned because of their impromptu and unsupervised nature. They are not command sponsored or attended by command leadership. While often conducted under the pretext of fun or enjoyment, they frequently result in debasement of personal dignity or physical injury to a Service member.

Q5 If someone volunteers to submit to an initiation like "tacking on crows," is it still a violation of the hazing policy?

ANS Yes! The most likely reason for voluntarily submitting to this type of initiation is fear of rejection or ridicule by peers. Whatever the reason, volunteering for physical abuse is like waiving the right to be a human being. Furthermore, if one member of a command voluntarily submits to this type of initiation, other members of the command might feel compelled to "volunteer".

Q6 Don't unit initiations serve a positive purpose by allowing someone new to be accepted as a team member?

ANS The rite of passage is important to unit morale and "Esprit De Corps." However, there are constructive ways of accomplishing this. Sporting events and job related challenges are examples of rites of passage that do not subject our personnel to ridicule or possible injury.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Q7 Does the ban on hazing and unit initiations include practical jokes like sending a new crew member for a bucket of prop wash?

ANS No. Practical jokes can provide a means of acceptance and by themselves do not constitute hazing. However, when practical jokes are used to ridicule, isolate and exclude Service members, especially when personnel have objected, the practice may result in a violation of the hazing policy statement. Common sense must be used at all times. If the commanding officer determines that a practical joke has resulted in a violation of the hazing policy statement, the commanding officer is required to take appropriate action.

Q8 How is a hazing policy going to prevent future incidents?

ANS The purpose of publishing a policy statement was to make all personnel aware of what does/does not constitute hazing. That, coupled with a knowledge of the consequences for violating the policy, will work toward eliminating hazing in the Coast Guard.