



Prevention and Control of Disease: Duties of Navy Medical Department Members

Introduction

Since 1842, the Chief of the US Navy's [Bureau of Medicine and Surgery](#) (BUMED) has been the administrative head of the Navy's Medical Department charged with the responsibility to define the fundamental duties of its members. The BUMED Chief did so and continues to do so via a directive-type manual well known as the Navy's [Manual of the Medical Department \(MANMED\)](#). Additional fundamental duties of Navy Medical Department members are defined only in US Navy Regulations, additional BUMED directives, and in the directives issued by their commanders and commanding officers (COs). This document highlights some of the fundamental duties of individual Navy Medical Department members that are related to Navy Medicine's efforts to enable the prevention and control of disease.

Valid US Navy manual-type Directives are defined at <http://go.usa.gov/huBJ>

All Navy Medical Corps Officers are in the Navy's Medical Department. The department is defined [here](#).

Click [here](#) for information about the BUMED Chief's Service-level executive authority to issue directives like the MANMED to all members of the Navy Medical Department.

All Navy Medical Corps Officers

The Medical Corps (MC) of the US Navy is the most senior staff corps of naval officers. Like all staff corps officers, their core duties are combat support in nature, and they work to support the line functions and objectives of the US Navy. Their responsibilities for the prevention and control of disease extend into the fields of others because of their unique qualifications. Every Navy MC officer has a basic duty to:

- treat the sick and to prevent and control disease. See article [2-8 of the MANMED](#) for the requirement.
- consult with other MC officers as needed in difficult situations. See article [2-9 of the MANMED](#).
- cooperate with the public health service and other federal, state, and local agencies for the prevention and reporting of diseases. See [article 2-17 of the MANMED](#).



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- provide instruction to Hospital Corpsman in their charge. See [article 2-15 of the MANMED](#).
- acquaint themselves with, obey and, so far as their authority extends; enforce laws, regulations, and lawful orders that are applicable to their duties and to the duties of those they supervise. [See article 1130 of US Navy Regulations](#).
- discharge their duties in conformance with existing laws, orders and regulations. In the absence of command instructions, they shall act in conformance with service policies and customs. [See article 1130 of US Navy Regulations](#). For example, Navy MC officers shall:
 - treat and control sexually transmitted diseases as directed by the chief of BUMED in [BUMEDINST 6222.10C](#).
 - report medical events (defined in the [Armed Forces Reportable Medical Events Guidelines & Case Definitions](#) and as defined by the State) following the procedural guidance in the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center's (NMCPHC) Medical Surveillance and Reporting Technical Manual [NMCPHC-TM 6220.12](#). See [BUMEDISNT 6220.12C](#) for the requirements.
 - evaluate all service members who report an animal exposure (with rabies transmission potential) and provide appropriate post exposure prophylaxis when indicated. See [BUMEDINST 6220.13A](#).

Commanding officers only are authorized to depart from lawful orders or instructions from their commander upon his or her own responsibility. See article 0802 of US Navy Regulations for details by clicking [here](#).

Any official command to do something lawful (spoken or written) from an authorized military superior to a subordinate military member is an order under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Command Senior Medical Officers (SMO)/Command Surgeons

When a Navy MC officer is the senior MC Officer of a non-claimancy 18 command or they are a Command Surgeon who represents the Chief of BUMED in all medical functions performed under their authority, these officers have a duty to:

- isolate or quarantine members of their command/crew as necessary. See [article 2-18 of the MANMED](#).



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- conduct health education programs including the dissemination of information regarding hygiene, sanitation, and the prevention of diseases. See [article 2-15 of the MANMED](#)
- advise their commander or CO about how their command(s) can maintain or meet health related standards associated with food preparation, environmental controls, housing, insect, pest, and rodent control, safe drinking water, waste disposal and other spheres which have a direct bearing on the health of naval personnel. See [article 2-10 of the MANMED](#).
- conduct inspections as necessary to advise their CO with respect to their crew's hygiene, the commands sanitation, command safety and the environmental conditions affecting the command. See [article 2-8 of the MANMED](#).
- ensure Navy Medical Department personnel in their charge are indoctrinated in the regulations and administrative procedures of the US Navy and the Navy Medical Department. See article [2-15 of the MANMED](#).
- perform military staff work in support of their CO's command actions. This effort is typically expressed in the preparation and maintenance of command directives for the organization and operation of the unit's Medical Department. See [article 2-12 of the MANMED](#) for details.
- consult with other MC officers as needed in difficult situations. See article [2-9 of the MANMED](#). For example, MC officers should consult with other MC officers (specialists) in their chain-of-command or from supporting medical treatment facilities or other supporting elements of Navy Medicine such as the NMCPHC's Navy Environmental and Preventive Medicine Units when they are considering prescribing prophylactic treatments for entire forces or units where no combatant

Aboard many Navy commands are Navy Medical Department members of the Medical Service Corps or Hospital Corps who are specifically trained about environmental health standards, the conduct of inspections, health hazard assessment, and the reporting of medical events. Command Surgeons, or SMOs often delegate their environmental inspections surveillance and medical event reporting duties to these individuals. However, the delegation does not relieve these officers of their responsibility for this work.

Click [here](#) and view Appendix C for a good definition of "military staff work."

The Chief of BUMED identified and recommends various military environmental health standards and inspection procedures via its non-directive technical [Manual of Naval Preventive Medicine](#).



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command requirements, military policy, or preventive medicine agency recommendations, or known medical indications exist for the proposed treatments.

- acquaint themselves with, obey and, so far as their authority extends, enforce laws, regulations, and legal orders that are applicable to their duties and to those they supervise. [See articles 1130 and 1132 of US Navy Regulations.](#)
- discharge their duties in conformance with existing laws, orders and regulations. In the absence of specific command instructions, they shall act in conformance with service policies and customs. [See article 1130 of US Navy Regulations.](#) For examples, these command MC officers shall:
 - work to control the spread of tuberculosis in accordance with [BUMEDINST 6224.8B.](#)
 - prescribe specific immunizations and chemoprophylaxis to members of their command(s) following requirements established by the Chief of BUMED. See [article 1-4 of BUMEDINST 6230.15B.](#)
 - ensure standard procedures exist in their command(s) for the investigation, evaluation, tracking, follow-up, and management of animal bites. See [BUMEDINST 6220.13A.](#)
 - ensure line commanders and their staff are educated on malaria threats and prevention measures for any unit deployments or operations where a potential malaria threat exists. See [BUMEDINST 6230.16](#) for the requirement.
 - establish an infection prevention and control program for their command(s). See [BUMEDINST 6220.9B](#) for the requirement.

Duties of Independent Duty Hospital Corpsman (IDC)

When a Hospital Corpsman (HM) is assigned to independent duty and he or she is the senior Navy Medical Department Representative (MDR) aboard their unit, the MDR represents the Chief of BUMED in all medical functions performed while on independent duty. [See article 9-16 of the MANMED.](#) HMs assigned to independent duty as MDRs have a fundamental duty to:

- care for the sick as authorized and directed. See [article 9-16 of the MANMED.](#)
- obey readily and strictly, and execute promptly the lawful orders of their superiors. See article [1132 of US Navy Regulations.](#) For examples SMDRs shall:
 - conduct inspections as necessary while serving as MDRs aboard navy ships. This is to advise their CO with respect to the crew's hygiene, the commands sanitation, command safety and the environmental conditions affecting the command. See [COMNAVSURFPACINST 6000.1/COMNAVSURFLANTINST 6000](#) page 12 paragraph "e." for the orders.



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- report medical events (defined in the [Armed Forces Reportable Medical Events Guidelines & Case Definitions](#) and as defined by the State) following the procedural guidance in the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center's (NMCPHC) Medical Surveillance and Reporting Technical Manual [NMCPHC-TM 6220.12](#). See [BUMEDISNT 6220.12C](#) and [COMNAVSURFPACINST 6000.1/COMNAVSURFLANTINST 6000](#) for the requirements.
- prescribe specific immunizations and chemoprophylaxis for their unit following guidance established by the Chief of BUMED in [article 1-4 of BUMEDINST 6230.15B](#) and as required by [COMNAVSURFPACINST 6000.1/COMNAVSURFLANTINST 6000](#).
- evaluate all members who report an animal exposure (with rabies transmission Potential) and provide appropriate post exposure prophylaxis when indicated. See [BUMEDINST 6220.13A](#) for the requirement.

Medical Service Corps (MSC) Staff officers

The fundamental duty of all MSC officers is to render support to other members the Navy Medical Department as directed by their superior officers. [See article 7-9 of the MANMED](#). Their specific duties are usually based upon their qualification for specific billets. For example, the Bureau of Naval Personnel indicates that MSC officers who are qualified to fill billets designated for Environmental Health Officers are prepared to:

- develop and maintain programs of environmental health.
- conduct staff work which enables them to recommend procedures that contribute to disease prevention and improvement of health, safety, and well-being of personnel supported by their command.
- participate in studies of environmental health significance.

MSC officers usually work in support of MC officers, Command Surgeons, Senior MDRs or the COs of medical commands.

Descriptions of the various billets Medical Service Corps officers can fill are provided by the Bureau of Naval Personnel [here](#).

Like other naval officers, all Navy MSC officers also have a fundamental duty to:

- acquaint themselves with, obey and, so far as their authority extends, enforce laws, regulations, and legal orders that are applicable to their assigned duties and to those they supervise. [See article 1130 of US Navy Regulations](#).
- discharge their duties in conformance with existing laws, orders and regulations. In the absence of specific command instructions, they shall act in conformance with service policies and customs. [See article 1130 of US Navy Regulations](#). For example, an EHO assigned to the Navy Medical Center Portsmouth, as the head of the Preventive



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Medicine Department, has a primary duty to manage the command's communicable disease surveillance and reporting program as directed by the commander of the medical center via NAVMEDCENPTSVAINST 5450.1K.

Nurse Corps Officers

The majority of Navy Nurse Corps officers are staff nurses who are primarily responsible for planning and administering nursing care in the Navy's health care settings. See [articles 8-14 and 8-18 of the MANMED](#). Like MSC officers, these officers usually work in support of Navy MC officers. For the prevention and control of disease, their specific duties are usually based upon their assignment to and qualification for specific billets.

As naval officers, they too must acquaint themselves with, obey and, so far as their authority extends, enforce laws, regulations, and legal orders that are applicable to their duties and to those they supervise. [See articles 1130 and 1132 of US Navy Regulations](#). They too must discharge their duties in conformance with existing laws, orders and regulations. In the absence of specific command instructions, they too shall act in conformance with service policies and customs. [See article 1130 of US Navy Regulations](#).

Other Hospital Corps Personnel

All have a fundamental duty to obey readily and strictly, and to execute promptly the lawful orders of their superiors. See article [1132 of US Navy Regulations](#). The specific duties of Hospital Corps personnel on any ship or station are as prescribed by their CO or a properly authorized MC officer, MSC officer, Nurse Corps officer, MDR or other Hospital Corps personnel. The utilization of Hospital Corps Personnel must be within the limitations of Navy Regulations, the law, and guidance from the Chief of BUMED in [Chapter 9 of the MANMED](#).