

WEATHER FORECASTING RAISE THE BAR OF EXCELLENCE
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BILOXI, Miss. – Grease pencils and paper charts, once common tools of the Navy's weather forecasters, are slowly becoming a memory. A new era in Navy weather forecasting training has produced state of the art computerized prediction systems designed to more accurately and rapidly predict weather to forward deployed units and meteorology commands. The Navy's Aerographer's Mates (AG) are continually raising the bar of distinction through their motto of *Excellence Through Training, Setting the Pace for Fleet Readiness*.

"An accurate weather forecast is critical to military planning and execution," said Commander, Naval Technical Training Unit (NTTU) Cmdr. Don Conlee. "We must ensure weather forecasters have the skills and knowledge to provide the Fleet with this vital information." NTTU is responsible for advanced education and training at the AG C School, located at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Miss.

This is all part of the Navy's Revolution in Training, a top priority of Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Vern Clark. The vision of the Revolution in Training is to increase Sailor proficiencies by providing the best training in the most efficient manner possible.

"We owe those who promise to serve the best possible training throughout their Navy experience so they can succeed and prosper in their professional and personal lives," said Clark.

Part of the revolution involves the creation of 13 Learning Centers. These Learning Centers are tasked with developing and maintaining the Sailor Continuum. This

continuum is designed to provide the Sailor with the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform their jobs effectively.

The Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training is responsible for the AG Sailor Continuum. The new AG C school curriculum is part of this new professional development continuum. The first class is scheduled to graduate in June 2003. The course was completely redesigned. Now students undergo an intense seven month training program. Outdated laboratories have been replaced with the latest weather forecasting tools, including electronic classrooms, multimedia projectors and individual student workstations.

“With constant advances in technology and a complete revamping of the weather forecasting curriculum,” said Conlee, “we believe these new graduates will be extremely prepared for weather forecasting in the 21st century.”

Using the Human Performance Systems Model (HPSM), AG community leaders conducted an exhaustive job task analysis. This process identified Fleet requirements and the knowledge, skills, and abilities that AGs need to know throughout their career. With this information, the AG community began working with academia and professional associations to dramatically improving the way the Navy trains weather forecasters.

By thinking outside of the box, Sailors are now studying weather forecasting theory at leading weather forecasting universities, including the University of South Alabama. Through a direct partnership, experts in weather forecasting at the university are providing expertise on modernization issues in the Navy’s weather forecasting curriculum. The result is that course material now being used by the Navy’s weather

forecasting students parallel those used by civilian university students. Additionally, some Aerographers Mate's are personally benefiting by earning college level credit.

"This modernization of the Aerographer's Mate curriculum, is giving military forecasters access to resources from many academic, research and operational forecasting institutions," said Wendy Abshire, a scientist at the Cooperative Program for Operational Meteorology Education and Training (COMET). COMET is a premier professional education resource for weather educators, students, and meteorologists. This partnership is enabling Sailors to participate in daily weather forecast competition with university students throughout the United States. By training and studying alongside their counterparts at other universities, Sailors are able to apply and practice what they learn in class.

The AG C school is also working with the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL). This relationship allows Sailors the opportunity to use advanced satellite imagery that reveal cloud elevations and wind speed. This type of imagery gives Sailors the means to track dust particles in the atmosphere. This skill gives AGs the ability to track weather systems any where in the world.

Along with NRL, AGs' C school now includes coursework in advanced principles of atmospheric physics, analysis and properties of the atmosphere, tropical meteorology, severe weather analysis, satellite interpretation, aviation support, and warfare operations.

"Obviously the weather is a key factor in planning any successful military operation," said CDR Dave Geisler, SUW Weapons with the Director of Surface Warfare (N76). "Whether it is a ship pulling into harbor, landing assault craft on the beach,

conducting aviation operations, or launching a missile strike, without an accurate prediction of the conditions you can't anticipate and mitigate the effects of the weather.”

From the Civil War to the current crisis with Iraq, weather forecasting has been a vital part of military operations. The Navy has made great strides in the last decades to modernize the technology and training available to Sailors in this important role. Through this enhancement in training and education, weather forecasters are now utilizing their craft in a 21st Century learning environment.

“By bringing together the talents and resources from experts from appropriate institutions throughout the weather forecasting field, the Naval Technical Training Unit has successfully modernized the content and delivery of its Aerographer’s Mate course,” said Conlee.

The Navy’s Revolution in Training is currently engaged in bringing this unique approach to training and education to all Sailors throughout the Fleet, to arm them with the tools and opportunities needed to learn, grow, lead, and excel.

To learn more about developments in AG training visit Navy Knowledge Online at www.nko.navy.mil then click on the Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training (under the Centers header), and look for Aerographer's Mates.