

*The*  
**Sector**  
Officer Assignment Guide



**November 2007**

**CGPC-OPM-2**

*“With our Sector organization, a realignment of the Coast Guard’s field structure to create unity of command in U.S. ports and improve operational effectiveness, we have locked in, from a doctrinal standpoint, how we are going to conduct shore-based operations. Those operations entail anything that is tethered by a range of operations fixed to a geographical area of responsibility – the distance you can take a small boat, for example. We’ve locked that force structure in now – the shore-based force structure for the Coast Guard.”*

Admiral Thad Allen, Commandant, USCG

## **Introduction**

With the transition to Sectors, many Coast Guard officers may be wondering how traditional “career paths” have been affected. There are now more choices and options within the Sector construct than ever before. As daunting as the changes may initially appear, the missions have not changed dramatically, nor has the need for Coast Guard professionals with expertise in a number of career paths. What has changed is how we are now organized to conduct our traditional missions.

Due to the extensive qualification processes along with reduced promotion points (for example, officers now pin on Lieutenant four years after being commissioned), officers have to make important decisions about their careers earlier than ever before. Making such momentous decisions is no small matter. Officers, particularly those in the earlier stages of their careers, need help and guidance to steer them along the path that’s best for them, and best for the Coast Guard. While there have been some sweeping changes resulting from the transition to Sectors, some things have not changed. There is still no single formula to achieve a successful career in today’s Coast Guard. An officer may take several paths during an entire career. Because of the assignment system’s complexity, it is impossible to predict with fidelity the specific outcomes of any choice. The decisions made and different paths taken throughout a career contribute to the many facets of an officer’s professional portfolio -- challenging assignments, formal training, promotions, leadership opportunities, staff experience, out-of-specialty tours, advanced military education, *etc.*, all contribute to future assignment possibilities and promotability.

## **Purpose**

This guide does not suggest an ideal career path because many factors influence the assignment process. The balance between Service, unit, and member needs is a delicate one and not one that can always be explained in any guide – no matter how comprehensive. As you contemplate assignment options within the Sector construct, strive to develop a balance which consists of a solid operational foundation, staff tours related to your specialty or in a career broadening sub-specialty, advanced education, and challenging leadership positions. We hope you use this guide as a way to manage your career with strategic intent.

## General Information

### The Foundation

The first step in any career plan is to define your goals. Many officers have not taken the time to define goals; however, you must identify your goals before you can make a map to reach them. In developing your goals, consider the following questions:

"What are my personal goals?"

"What are my professional goals?"

"Do I want to be a ... Marine Inspector?... Response Department Head?  
... Mission Support Specialist?... Sector Commander?"

Regardless of your individual answers to these questions, goals are essential elements in achieving a successful career. You should continually assess where you are in your career, seek guidance in how you are contributing to command goals, and evaluate progress in meeting your own personal goals.

When setting your goals, consider career milestones such as when you will be in zone for the next promotion and when you want to apply for advanced education opportunities. These milestones are critical to understanding whether your goals are realistic and whether you will be able to fully pursue your chosen career path. Promotion points vary slightly from year-to-year, 2007 promotion points are provided for your reference in the accompanying table.

<u>2007 Promotion Points</u>	
(Years)	
CAPT	22.5
CDR	16.0
LCDR	10.5
LT	4.0
LTJG	1.5

You may find it helpful to discuss your goals with your supervisor, a mentor, career counselor, or an assignment officer during career counseling. He or she has the experience and insight to help you further develop and achieve your goals. Supervisors play a significant role in advising and overseeing the professional development of their officers through broadened mission training and by providing opportunities for development of competencies, qualifications, and experience. The remainder of this guide may help you clarify your goals and assist with planning your career. Coast Guard leaders have been, and will continue to be, officers who demonstrate professionalism, performance, a commitment to education, and prove their ability to lead. The assignment system assists in planning your future, but also has the responsibility to balance Coast Guard needs and personal desires.

Each officer's career development is critical to the Coast Guard's overall success. Supervisors and senior officers should pay particular attention to mentoring junior officers during this period of significant organizational change. Active mentoring and timely performance feedback is the best method of preparing officers for future assignments. As a reminder, Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are an effective career planning tool

and COMDTINST 5357.1A dated 02 FEB 06 requires an IDP for all junior officers who are in their first four years of commissioned service.

As a Coast Guard officer, regardless of your goals, solid performance in your current assignment keeps you competitive for the greatest number of assignment options. There may be times when the needs of the Coast Guard will be different than what you believe is the "perfect" career path.

**What is a Sector?**

Sector Commands were designed to integrate traditional Coast Guard program-based organizational structures (*i.e.*, search and rescue (SAR), law enforcement (LE), aids to navigation (ATON), marine environmental Response (MER), Marine Inspections (MI), selected Air Stations, Vessel Traffic Services (VTS), *etc.*) into a single command that executes all operational missions through integrated prevention and response staffs supported by an organic logistics component. This new organizational construct represents a transformation from a Coast Guard traditionally organized around its operational programs, to one organized around core operational service delivery processes. Sectors combined Group, MSO and VTS staffs (and in some cases, Air Stations) in a standard service delivery structure that includes Prevention, Response and Logistics Departments. The standard Sector organizational construct is depicted in Figure 1.

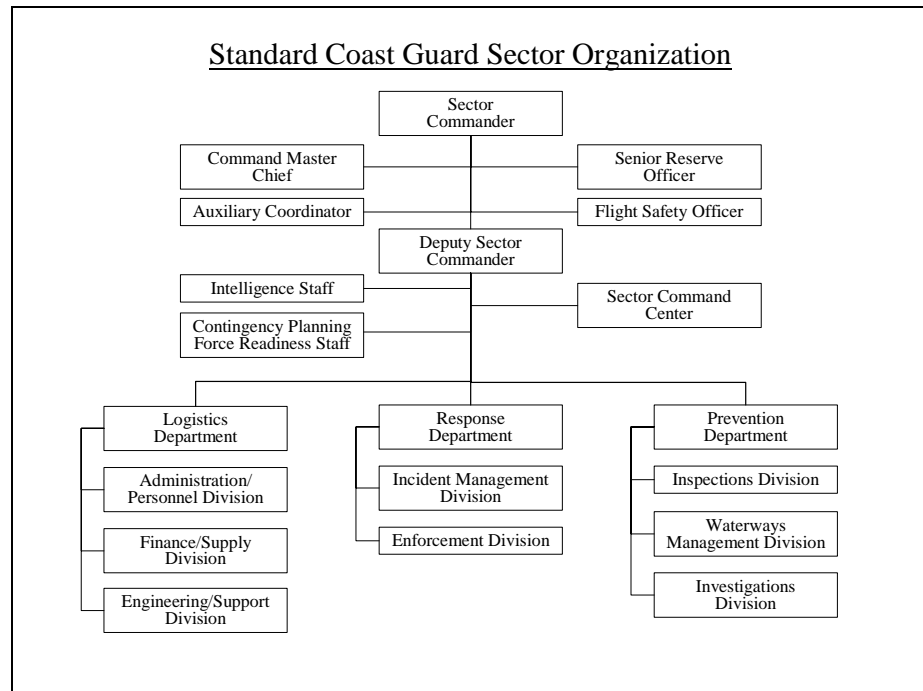


Fig 1. Standard Coast Guard Sector Organization

A detailed discussion of the roles and responsibilities of each billet will be available in the *U.S. Coast Guard Sector Organization Manual*, COMDTINST M5401.6 (series). Note: The Sector Organizational Manual

is in the concurrent clearance process and is pending release.

The integration of program-based organizational structures within the Sector construct has many organizational benefits. The Sector construct ensures a system of interdependence through direct interaction and close coordination between all Sector units and sub-units.

A unity of command promotes an environment of responsibility and accountability in the Sector construct. Port partnerships with other federal, state, public, and private Sector stakeholders are more efficient by virtue of having one Coast Guard point of contact in the port complex. Unity of command within the Sector area of operations promotes rapid dissemination of information and guidance to port stakeholders during a crisis.

### **Entry into a Sector Career Path**

Officers beginning one of the career paths offered by Sectors should enter a Sector between their first and third tours. As is the case with many assignment issues -- timing, billet availability, competencies, and geographic desires -- all play a critical role in development of assignment options.

Most officers completing their first operational tour afloat or ashore should anticipate a follow on assignment to a staff billet. Except for Logistics Department assignments, Sectors are the primary operational career path for prevention and response officers and should not be viewed as an alternative to a staff tour for officers from other operational specialties.

Junior officers departing an afloat unit who wish to compete for Sector assignments should craft an e-resumé that communicates their desire for a Sector billet, keeping in mind they are leaving an operational assignment and therefore may rotate to a staff assignment next. A mix of field and staff billets on an e-resumé which provides assignment options is advantageous over an e-resumé which lists only one "type" of billet. If a field tour at a Sector is not available, consider seeking staff tours that are programmatically aligned to support Sector prevention or response billets. A staff tour in a prevention or response related billet can provide additional insights when the time comes to perform future Sector duties. It is important to note however, a related staff tour is not a prerequisite to future assignment to a Sector.

Officers should have a good idea of a desired career path going into their third tour. It is difficult (and sometimes impossible) to be "entry level" in any career path as a senior Lieutenant, so early goal setting and forethought as well as good mentoring are extremely important. Assignment to a Prevention Department is more difficult later in an officer's career, though not impossible. Officers with ATON experience, for example, will bring excellent skills to the Waterways Management (WWM) Division of a Sector.

A common trait of prevention and response career paths is that officers must

become knowledgeable about Coast Guard missions, management activities, and functions within the Sector construct. An underpinning of the Sector construct is “collaborative interdependence” between the Sector departments. This means that Sector components will demonstrate multi-mission agility across organizational lines, regardless of functional responsibility.

Candidates for the Logistics Department Head billet will enter the Sector construct with experiences and competencies gained in complementary career paths. However, your availability for assignment to a Sector logistics billet may be impacted by a Service need for you to remain in your specialty. Some specialties do not have enough officers to fill their in-specialty billets, therefore out-of-specialty opportunities are limited.

As you advance in your career there are varying opportunities for increased breadth of experience at a Sector. In developing career goals, keep in mind that progression within a community is gained by seeking billets of greater responsibility while acquiring the skills and qualifications that will make the officer competitive for future billets within that community. The Sector Commander and Sector Deputy Commander billets are open to officers from primarily the prevention and response career paths, although officers from afloat and aviation career paths with a breadth of operational experience and strong leadership are eligible to compete for these leadership positions.

**Junior Officer  
First Tour  
Assignments**

While the officer corps has grown, this growth has occurred largely in maritime mission areas other than sea duty. At the same time, efficiencies have reduced the number of opportunities for junior officers to be assigned afloat. It is in the best interest of the Service to continue to assign an appropriate number of Officer Candidate School (OCS), and direct commission officers afloat, therefore some Academy graduates will receive their first operational assignments to units other than cutters, primarily Sectors. Some newly commissioned Ensigns may even be selected for flight training immediately after their graduation from OCS or the Academy.

We will assign junior officers above authorized billet strength to meet emerging requirements and maximize the opportunity to provide first tour junior officers with operational experience. This decision was arrived at by carefully considering all practical alternatives and is guided by several principles – preserve the Coast Guard’s inherent characteristics as a military, maritime, multi-mission service; provide the best balance of assignment opportunities to develop maritime operational and leadership competencies; and provide optimum officer acculturation for officers from every accession source. CGPC-OPM will ensure reasonable operational assignment opportunities for all officers from each accession source.

This first tour assignment policy gives new officers the opportunity to build their career on a firm operational foundation, regardless of their eventual

specialty. It also provides some flexibility to adjust course at an early stage, should one choose to do so. If an officer is not assigned to an operational tour after commissioning, they should expect this as a second tour. If an officer has been assigned afloat and wishes to pursue a Sector career, they may have the opportunity to enter the Sector career path upon completion of their first tour. However, most who transition into a Sector career path from afloat will do so during a third tour, following an assignment to a staff.

Earning a qualification as a Sector Duty Officer, where one oversees the conduct of all Coast Guard missions within a geographical region, is an important first step to understanding the roles and responsibilities of the different departments within the Sector environment.

**Developing  
Expertise and  
Establishing a  
Specialty**

There are limited opportunities to alternate Sector tours between response, prevention, and logistics during the course of a career. A limiting factor is the low number of officers who hold specialized qualifications, particularly in marine inspections, and the corresponding amount of time it takes to acquire proficiency in the areas of prevention and response. It is also imperative to staff the organization with subject matter experts who can train and guide junior officers entering the Sector work environment during this period of change. As officers with Sector experience become tour complete and go on to other Sectors or staff tours, their experience will prove complementary in conducting missions with other Coast Guard elements and the ability to shift departments may become less constrained. Therefore it is imperative that all officers clearly establish themselves in at least a single officer specialty early in their career by gaining all of the qualifications that come with their description of duties. The current paradigm for officer career management holds that officers specialize early in their careers and then look to become broadened specialists at the mid-grade ranks.

**Post-Graduate  
Timing**

Determining the ideal time to apply for advanced education invariably is an important piece of career planning. Timing is everything. Nominally, you should apply for PG selection a year away from being tour complete in a field billet. The rationale for this is the majority of follow-on tours after PG school are in staff billets. Therefore, once you start school, you can expect to be away from the field for four to six years. If you pursue graduate school coming off of a staff tour, you risk derailing your operational career path as a result of having spent too much time away from the field. For this reason, PG panels often consider the officer's current billet as criteria for whether or not to select them for PG education. Since our PG billets exist because of a Service need for explicit expertise within a specific discipline, advanced education opportunities often enhance duty performance and technical competence and this investment in education pays dividends throughout an officer's career. When considering a program, you should seek education that complements your areas of expertise or that provides career broadening opportunities, rather than just seeking a degree for a degree's sake.

## Prevention

### The Prevention Career Path

The prevention specialty encompasses the functions of marine inspections, waterways management, and investigations duties. The Prevention Department focuses on gaining compliance with regulatory standards, and the design and maintenance of waterways systems to prevent incidents. Prevention requires expertise in the technical understanding and practical conduct of verification inspections of: vessels, waterfront facilities, and containers; investigations of casualties; enforcing waterways safety and security standards; and waterways analyses.

### Prevention Department Organization & Functions

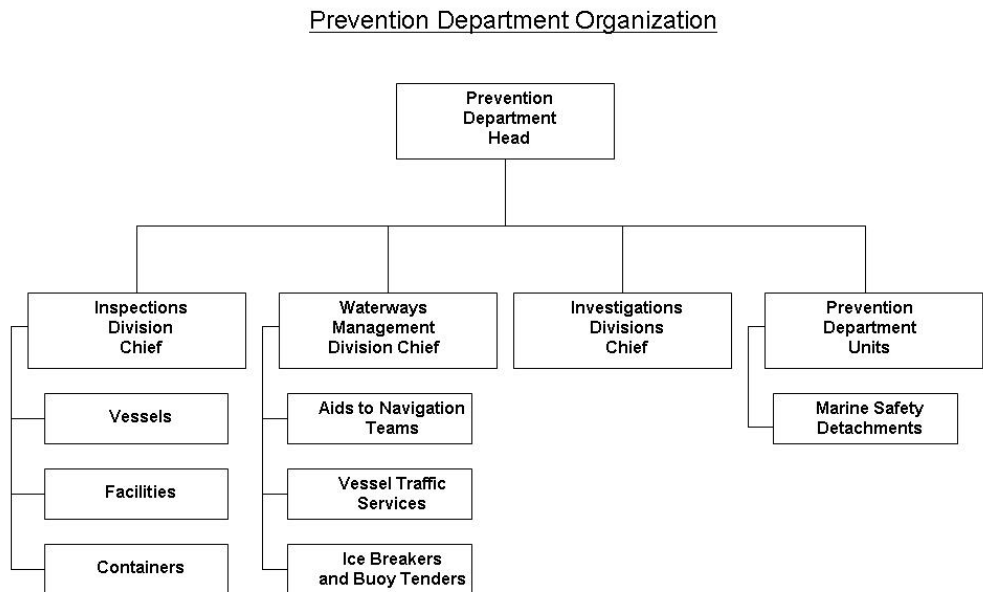


Fig 2. Prevention Department Organization

As depicted in Figure 2, under the direction of the Sector Commander and the Deputy Sector Commander, the Chief, Prevention Department shall be responsible for all Coast Guard operations directed at preventing maritime casualties, accidents and security incidents, as described below:

**a.** Manage all Sector prevention and compliance units/sub-units not under the direct oversight of the District and provide proper risk assessment and operational support as needed. This includes all Aids to Navigation Teams (ANTs), Vessel Traffic Services (VTS), Marine Safety Units, and Marine Safety Detachments supporting the full range of Sector operations.

**b.** Coordinate with the Response Department and other Sector elements to



conduct prevention mission planning as a tactical process, including but not limited to addressing commander's intent, concept of operations, execution, monitoring and feedback.

**c.** Work with all Sector components to ensure Sector unity of effort.

**d.** Coordinate with other federal, state, and local agencies as may be required to accomplish departmental goals and objectives.

**e.** Coordinate with the Coast Guard Auxiliary and other maritime stakeholders to ensure the continuity of safety, security and environmental protection prevention operations.

**f.** Manage and oversee the regulatory and inspection elements of the Coast Guard's safety, security and environmental protection responsibilities to ensure compliance in regulated communities, including but not limited to:

- (1) U.S. and Foreign flag vessel inspection.
- (2) Facility inspection (fixed, mobile, and offshore structures).
- (3) Container inspection.
- (4) Recreational boating safety outreach.
- (5) Un-inspected vessel safety.
- (6) Maritime Transportation Security Act (2002).

**g.** Manage and oversee the system design, constituent interface and regulatory elements of the Coast Guard's maritime mobility responsibilities (waterways management) to ensure effective and efficient commerce and access on navigable waterways, including but not limited to:

- (1) Aids to navigation.
- (2) Limited access areas (*e.g.*, Safety & Security zones, Regulated Navigation Areas).
- (3) Marine event permitting.
- (4) Ice Operations.
- (5) WAMS/PAWSA.
- (6) VTS/AIS.

**h.** Conduct, manage and oversee the Coast Guard's maritime investigation responsibilities, including but not limited to:

- (1) Marine casualty investigation.
- (2) Marine pollution investigation.
- (3) Investigations of negligence, misconduct, incompetence or use of dangerous drugs, and violations of laws or regulations by Coast Guard licensed and documented personnel.
- (4) Suspension and revocation proceedings.

- (5) Civil penalty investigation.
- (6) Administrative clemency.

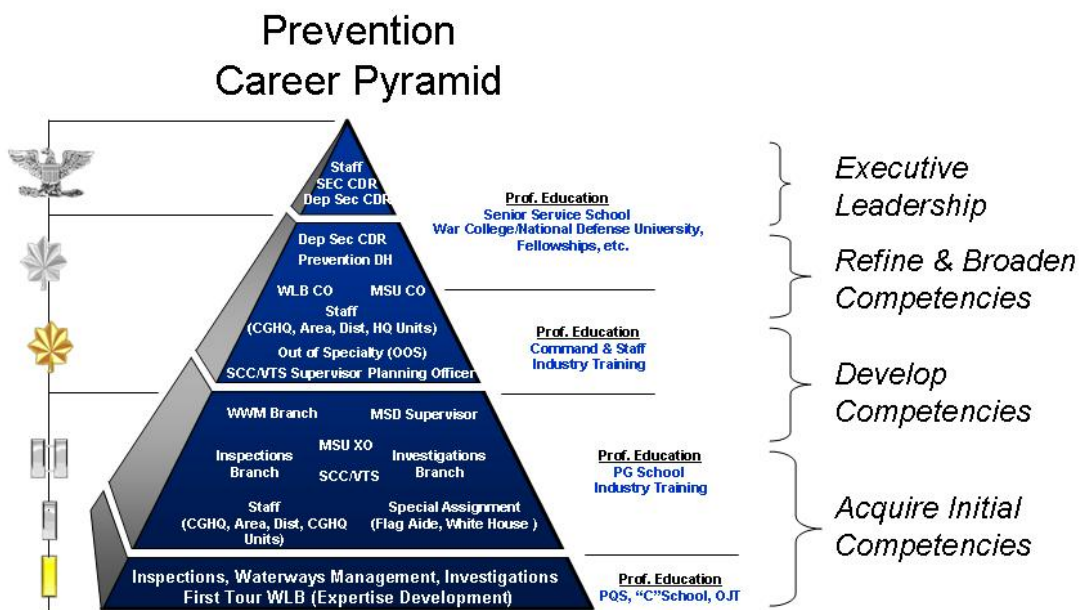


Fig 3. – Prevention Specialty Career Pyramid

**Acquire Initial Competencies**  
(1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> tours)

When first assigned to a billet at a Sector, one is expected to first specialize in the area assigned, then secondly gain broadened exposure to different areas within the prevention career path. Prevention officers initially assigned to a Sector or Marine Safety Unit should strive to acquire experience in one or more of the three primary prevention tracks – marine inspection, marine investigations, or waterways management. In larger ports, there is typically not enough time during an initial tour to gain additional competencies other than in one primary area. Development of operational competencies in your initial tour will provide a basis from which to further develop or broaden in future assignments. The risk of not developing an appropriate level of expertise is that options for follow-on tours will be limited by virtue of not having the requisite skills necessary to perform at the next higher level.

Some ports do not afford as robust a training environment as others. In these locations, you should strive to gain initial expertise and upon assignment to a follow-on field billet, continue your professional specialty development. The *Marine Safety Manual* (COMDTINST M16000.6 (series)) Vol. 1, Chap 7, and

ALCOAST 387/07 lists qualifications and requirements for officers assigned to prevention billets.

In the initial assignment to a Sector, development of expertise in a focused area is developed by obtaining prevention competencies, attending “C” schools, completing Personnel Qualification Standards (PQS), and by on-the-job training (OJT) opportunities. For an in-depth narrative on the specific functions and competencies associated with the various paths within the prevention career, refer to the *U.S. Coast Guard Sector Organizational Manual*, COMDTINST M5401.6 and the *U.S. Coast Guard Competency Management System Manual* M5300.2. (Note: The Sector Organizational Manual is in the concurrent clearance process and its release is anticipated in the near future.)

A standard Sector tour length is three years. CGPC-OPM will work closely with Sector Prevention Department Heads to gauge where first-tour officers are in their career development with respect to obtaining qualifications. An option of extending for a fourth year may apply primarily to officers pursuing Marine Inspector (MI) qualifications, though all officers can request an extension as part of the normal assignment process. The fourth year option is necessary as some ports do not afford robust training opportunities, by reason of the types of vessels calling in the AOR, OJT opportunities, or operational tempo limitations. In ports where remaining a fourth year would not result in an appreciable increase in qualifications, officers should expect to transfer when tour complete. The preferred way for commands to pass this information is via the annual command concerns correspondence. Factors which CGPC-OPM will consider in analyzing a request for an extension include: performance; how close the officer is to obtaining a major designator/qualification; the overall strength within the rest of the Prevention Department; and Service need in other Sectors or staffs for the expertise acquired in the field billet. Officers should plan on completing initial training during their first three years.

Following completion of a field tour, officers should pursue PG education and/or a follow-on staff tour where they will build upon the competencies and experience acquired in the Sector. Staff billets provide an opportunity to develop both the "big picture" view of the mission, and a chance to hone decision making skills. Staff billets are available at CGHQ, Areas, Districts, Training Centers, the Marine Safety Center, National Maritime Center, National Strike Force Coordination Center, and the Deployable Ops Group.

There are limited out-of-specialty (OOS) opportunities as Junior Officers typically have not yet developed the level of expertise needed to operate independently or as a subject matter expert. It is not meant to imply that you build technical expertise only during the initial years of your career -- you will always be adding to your technical skills. It also doesn't mean you will be

**Develop  
Competencies  
(2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Tours)**

working solely on technical skills during this period -- building a strong competency-centric foundation will be your primary focus, but you will also be developing leadership ability and administrative skills. Figure 3 is not a complete list but it illustrates many of the opportunities which may be available to you at different points in your career.

Billets within the second tier of the pyramid in Figure 3 are meant to build upon skills developed during the first Sector assignment. Billets listed in the prevention career pyramid represent a range of potential assignment outcomes and the types of billets available at each level of development. Generally speaking, a change in Sector locations is highly desirable as it is beneficial to seek jobs in different geographic areas within the Sector construct in order to gain a broader perspective of the total Coast Guard mission and a deeper understanding of how all the "pieces" fit together as you prepare for senior leadership positions. There are also billets in which your expertise may prove complementary. For example, an officer with marine casualty investigations competencies might consider a tour in contingency planning. Knowledge gained in a billet that uses complementary skills will lay the foundation for future success as a department head or as Sector command cadre, and provide a broader context with which to assess emergent issues. During this phase, prevention officers may be assigned to a variety of billets at all levels, including Prevention Department Head, Marine Safety Unit (MSU) command cadre, or branch chief billets.

Prevention officers completing their second or third field tour will be assigned to staffs where the knowledge and experience gained earlier may be applied. Upon completion of your second or third tour in the prevention career path, a variety of new options emerge. You'll have the opportunity to:

- Concentrate on building depth in your professional portfolio by managing a larger branch or division in one of the larger Sectors.
- Compete for a Coast Guard sponsored post graduate program or an Industry Training program. (There is additional information at the end of this guide regarding PG School.)
- Seek a career broadening assignment in an out-of-specialty (OOS) billet which becomes more pronounced at this level. Officers who have developed competencies in certain areas may be assigned to positions that require more specialized prevention expertise. Officers with a prevention background have unique opportunities at the Department of Homeland Security, NORTHCOM, or overseas as International Port Security Liaison Officers, to name a few examples. Assignment to these highly sought after jobs are based on an officer's performance and experience. Other billets have a less direct link to the prevention career path, however after completion of one of these

OOS tours, officers should expect to return to their primary specialty.

Officers who previously served in the legacy marine safety program in any of the three primary prevention areas: marine inspections, casualty investigations, or waterways management will continue to be assigned primarily within the Prevention Department. Few officers have sufficient depth of experience in all three prevention areas at this level. Officers with a specialization in one area should seek assignment options which will enable them to broaden their area of expertise within the prevention career path.

At this point, some officers may be entering into the Sector construct from other specialty areas. Notably, those officers who served tours in the ATON operations afloat specialty will have the opportunity to augment the Waterways Management Division, thereby providing expertise in both ATON and Vessel Traffic Services billets. It is difficult to gain enough marine inspection or marine casualty qualifications as an officer entering the Sector world of work at the mid-grade Lieutenant or above rank, due to the long qualification and training pipe-line. For that reason, officers entering the prevention career path at this juncture should place emphasis on gaining an understanding of how the Sector operates and attaining exposure to other elements of the prevention mission so that a future assignment as Chief, Prevention Department is feasible.

Staff billets at this level provide an opportunity to develop both the "big picture" view of the prevention mission, and a chance to hone decision-making skills. Each level of staff is important. Headquarters and Headquarters units, Areas, Districts, and other government agency staffs provide opportunities to collaborate and develop solutions to issues you are familiar with, each from a different point of view while making a positive impact service-wide. Increased job responsibility is essential in developing expertise to enhance decision-making and leadership skills.

**Refine & Broaden  
Competencies  
(5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> tours)**

There are many opportunities for leadership in the prevention career path. It normally takes multiple field assignments to experience the full breadth of prevention opportunities. The command screening panel process, which is described in further detail later in this guide, will be a determinant of future assignment options. Sector Commanders are not required, nor expected, to have in-depth experience and expertise in all of the missions they oversee. They consequently will be looking to their staffs to provide a breadth and depth of expertise. Billets such as Sector Deputy Commander, Contingency Planning, Sector Command Center (SCC) Supervisor and several other billets at large Sectors are available for officers that are seeking a challenging leadership position. Officers from career paths other than prevention or response will also be considered, consistent with Service need for their competencies and experience.

# Response

## The Response Career Path

The response career path focuses on command and control activities associated with incident response and/or security enforcement. Response billets require proficiency in command, control and communications processes, and the exercise of response and security enforcement expertise to accomplish incident command and crisis management operations.

## Response Department Organization & Functions

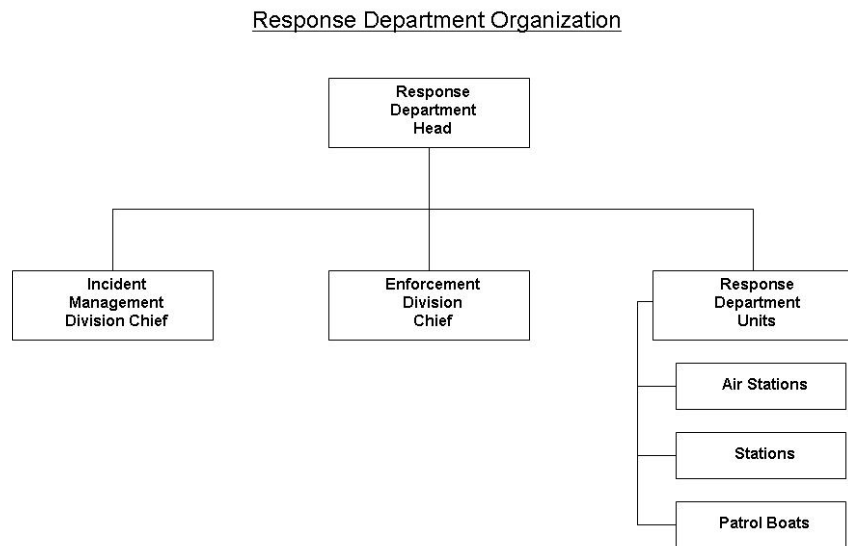


Fig 4. Response Department Organization

As depicted in Figure 4, under the direction of the Sector Commander and the Deputy Sector Commander, the Response Department shall be responsible for the direction and employment of all assigned Coast Guard response forces as described below:

**a.** Direct Coast Guard security enforcement (includes execution of: ports waterways and coastal security (PWCS); enforcement of laws and treaties (ELT); recreational boating safety (RBS) enforcement; and commercial fishing vessel safety (CFVS) enforcement operations) and incident response and mitigation operations (includes SAR, pollution and all hazards response operations).

**b.** Ensure the professional training, qualification and development of all assigned personnel and direct operational readiness of all assigned assets and sub-units (i.e., boats, cutters, *etc.*). Provide proper risk assessment and

operational support as needed.

c. Serve as SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC) unless assumed by the Sector Commander.

d. Coordinate an effective SAR, pollution and all hazards incident management response program.

e. Coordinate with the Coast Guard Auxiliary and other maritime stakeholders to ensure the continuity of safety, security and environmental protection response operations.

f. Coordinate with the Prevention Department, intelligence, command center and other Sector elements to conduct response and security mission planning as a tactical process, including but not limited to addressing commander's intent, concept of operations, execution, monitoring and feedback.

g. Coordinate closely with other DHS agencies, and with other federal, state and local partners as may be required to jointly respond to and mitigate the effects of maritime threats and vulnerabilities.

h. Work with all Sector components to ensure Sector unity of effort.

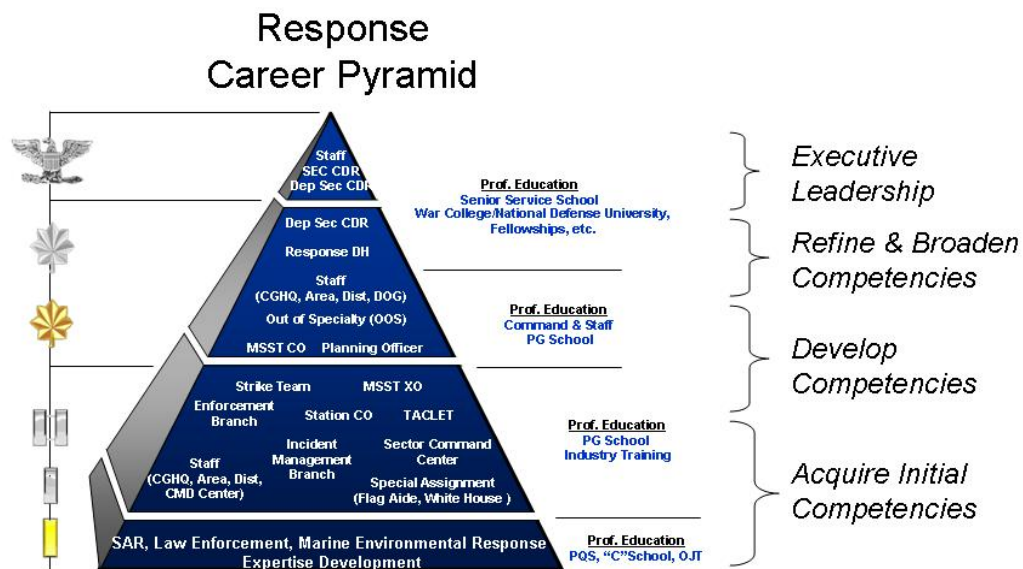


Fig 5. – Response Specialty Career Pyramid

**Acquire Initial Competencies (1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> tours)**

As a junior officer reporting to a Sector Response Department for an initial assignment, the expectation is your focus will be on completing basic response qualifications. It will be a challenge to complete all of the qualifications listed below during your first tour, but those officers who are able to accomplish the qualification process will find they are well prepared for future assignment to a multitude of billets. Listed below are the key qualifications that all response officers should strive to complete:

- SCC Controller.
- Pollution Investigator.
- LE Boarding Officer (at least Boarding Team Member).
- Port Ops Boarding Officer.
- On-scene Coordinator’s Representative.
- Boat Crewman (any platform).

One of the more significant changes to occur as the Coast Guard transforms into the Sector construct has been the integration of environmental response duties into the Response Department.

In general, officers should expect a staff tour after completing a field assignment. A few officers may have the opportunity for follow-on operational assignment, *e.g.*, Marine Safety Security Teams (MSSTs), but the majority will be assigned to a staff billet. Typical staff tours include Search and Rescue (SAR), Marine Environmental Response (MER), Intelligence, and Law Enforcement (LE) related billets which are located at Coast Guard Headquarters (CGHQ), Areas, Districts, Training Centers, or DOG. One billet, in particular, that can greatly enhance an officer’s response skills is assignment to an Area or District Command Center. Officers can complete the Sector Command Center (SCC) controller qualification, if not yet completed during their first tour, and thereby increase their expertise in Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator (SMC) activities.

Although the SCC will be managed outside of the Response and Prevention Departments, personnel within those departments will play a key role in the tactical control of Sector assets and activities via the SCC. Officers to staff SCC’s will be drawn from the ranks of officers who have response and prevention competencies.

In the initial assignment to a Sector, officers will typically acquire expertise in a focused area by obtaining response competencies, attending “C” schools, completing Personnel Qualification Standards (PQS), and by on-the-job training (OJT) opportunities. For an in-depth narrative on specific functions and competencies associated with the various paths within the response career path, refer to the *U.S. Coast Guard Sector Organizational Manual*, COMDTINST M5401.6 and the *U.S. Coast Guard Competency Management System Manual* M5300.2.



**Develop  
Competencies  
(2<sup>nd</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> tours)**

A second tour at a Sector Response Department will typically occur during the mid-grade to senior Lieutenant time-frame. This is an ideal phase for officers from the afloat community to integrate into the Response Department at a Sector. Experiences gained in the afloat career path are complementary and supportive of response operations. These opportunities may be limited as there is a need to retain Cuttermen in support of the cutter fleet and an operational tour at a Sector may negatively impact career milestones/timing for future afloat assignment.

There will also be officers whose primary specialization is in the Response career path who will be returning to a Sector for a follow-on tour. Typical assignments to compete for include assignment as branch chief within the Incident Management, Enforcement, Contingency Planning Branch, or Sector Command Center. At this phase of your career, you can work on becoming an expert within the response career path. Through further development of your response competencies, you will better align yourself for future tours of increasing scope and responsibility. Additional operational Lieutenant billets, which response officers may compete for, include station command or MSST command cadre. Successfully obtaining the qualifications listed above, as well as an understanding of small boat operations, boat crew semi-annual currency requirements, personal protective equipment, and standardization (STAN)/ready for operations (RFO) practices, will better position officers for these types of billets.

Upon completion of your second or third tour in the response career path, a variety of new options emerge. You'll have the opportunity to:

- Concentrate on building depth in your professional portfolio by managing a larger branch or division in one of the larger Sectors.
- Compete for a Coast Guard sponsored post graduate program or an Industry Training program. (There is additional information at the end of this guide regarding PG School.)
- Consider a career broadening assignment in an out-of-specialty (OOS) billet. OOS opportunities are more pronounced at this level. Officers who have developed competencies in certain areas may be assigned to agencies that require more specialized response expertise such as the Department of Homeland Security, DOG, JIATF, or NORTHCOM. Other OOS billets have a less direct link to the response career path, however after completion of one of these tours, officers should expect to return to their primary specialty following the OOS assignment.
- Request a non-operational assignment. Assignments which typically blend well with the response career path include: Intelligence, Boat Forces support in CG-3 or District (dr), *etc.* Assignment to one of

these support billets allows an officer to gain additional skills and competencies which in turn provide an officer with a broader skill-set and competency base.

Departing an operational response assignment is the best time to consider applying for advanced education. Officers who do not go onto PG school can expect assignment to a staff tour. Staff billets provide an opportunity to develop both the "big picture" view of the mission, and a chance to hone your decision-making skills. A variety of staff billets ranging from CGHQ, HQ units, Areas, and Districts provide opportunities to build upon skills acquired in a field assignment. It is advantageous to vary the location and type of billets you seek, if possible – *e.g.*, if you were a District Controller, it would prove beneficial to seek a Sector in a different district so that you gain a breadth of experience. Subtle differences in how operations are conducted can provide added perspective and context from which to view operations in the future.

**Refine & Broaden  
Competencies  
(5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> tours)**

There are numerous leadership opportunities throughout the response career path. It normally takes at least three different field assignments to experience the full breadth of response activities in sufficient depth. The more diverse your experience in terms of types of jobs and geographic locations, the better prepared you will find yourself to tackle new challenges. The outcome of the screening process will, in part, determine an officer's next type of assignment. (The screening process is described in further detail later in this guide.)

## Logistics

### The Logistics Department

The Logistics Department supports all Sector activities through the coordinated balance of asset maintenance and availability, personnel preparation and provisioning, and the financial aspects of planned and unscheduled operations.

### Logistics Department Organization & Functions

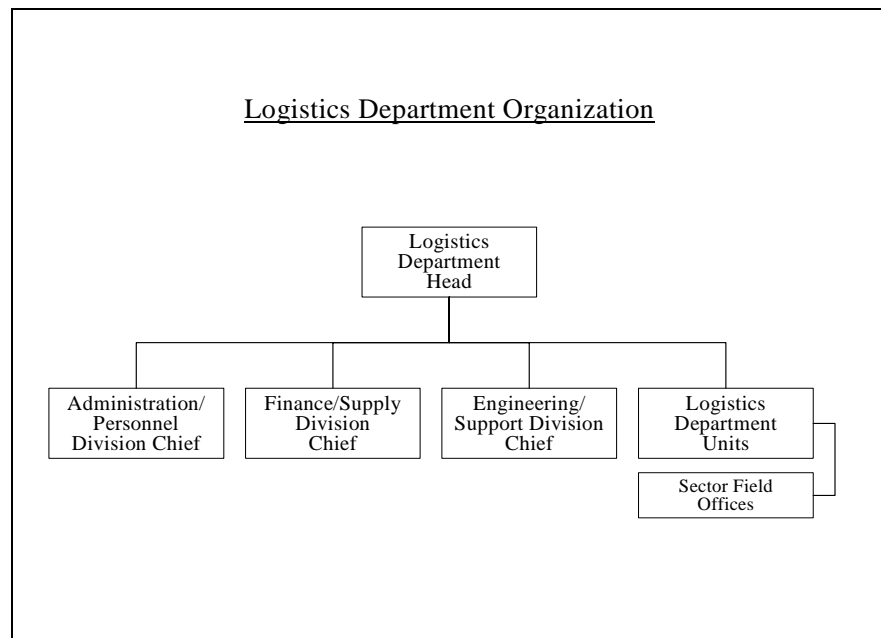


Fig. 6: Logistics Department Organization

As depicted in Figure 6, under the general direction of the Sector Commander and the Deputy Sector Commander, the Chief, Logistics Department shall:

- a.** Direct the management and execution of all organic, unit level support activities for administration/personnel, finance and supply, and logistics engineering support services for the Sector.
- b.** At Sectors where designated as Commanding Officer, Enlisted Personnel, exercise command authority per Coast Guard Regulations, Manual for Courts Martial, and Commandant or District level directives.
- c.** Manage all unit administration and personnel actions for active duty, reserve and civilian members within the Sector.

#### **Administration**

- (1) Coordinate and execute organic administration support.
- (2) Coordinate Sector-wide collateral duties.

- (3) Administer Sector Morale program.
- (4) Manage unit level personnel and physical security administration.
- (5) Administer Sector General Military Training (GMT).

**Personnel**

- (1) Personnel Actions
- (2) Medical
- (3) Work-life and Wellness
- (4) Housing

**d.** Coordinate career development programs for Sector personnel and provide a necessary flow of communication to each Department Head and Officer-In-Charge on career planning, career development, leadership initiatives, and policies and programs affecting their active, civilian and reserve personnel. Inform individuals on career opportunities, incentives, military rights and benefits, and advantages of a Coast Guard career.

**e.** In partnership with the servicing ISC, coordinate and administer a comprehensive educational services program for Sector personnel, including nonresident training, voluntary education, and college video/audio courses.

**f.** Administer finance and supply functions for the Sector. Inter-Sector financial management and reporting will be provided by the assigned ISC.

- (1) Develop and maintain budget plans, maintain accounts, and manage the disbursement of funds.
- (2) Manage real and general-purpose property programs.
- (3) Oversee the supply system for the Sector including the procurement, stowage and issue of items assigned to the Sector and subordinate units.
- (4) Manage Sector transportation.
- (5) Manage galley operations [as applicable].

**g.** Coordinate unit level engineering support for Sector facilities and assets:

- (1) Coordinate electronics, naval, aviation [as applicable], and facilities engineering programs with the servicing ISC, ESU, NESU, or CEU.
- (2) Administer motor vehicles program.
- (3) Oversee environmental compliance program.
- (4) Manage armory and weapons training program.

**h.** Direct and oversee all organic level support activities of Sector units/sub-units including bases and detachments. Intermediate and depot level activities will be scheduled by the MLC/ISC organization. Provide proper risk assessment and operational support as needed.

**i.** Work with all Sector components to ensure Sector unity of effort.

**Career Planning and Assignment to Logistics Dept Positions**

Unlike officers in prevention and response specialties, Sector logistics does not represent a unique specialty. The Logistics Department is unique in that officers from any officer specialty who exhibit outstanding performance may be assigned. Since the role of the Logistics Department is primarily focused on mission support functions, officers assigned will primarily be from the mission support specialties.

Since logistics in itself is not a career path or specialty, there is no logistics career pyramid similar to the ones shown in figures 3 and 5 for prevention and response. Figure 7 is perhaps the most realistic depiction of specialties and how they fit into the Sector logistics picture.

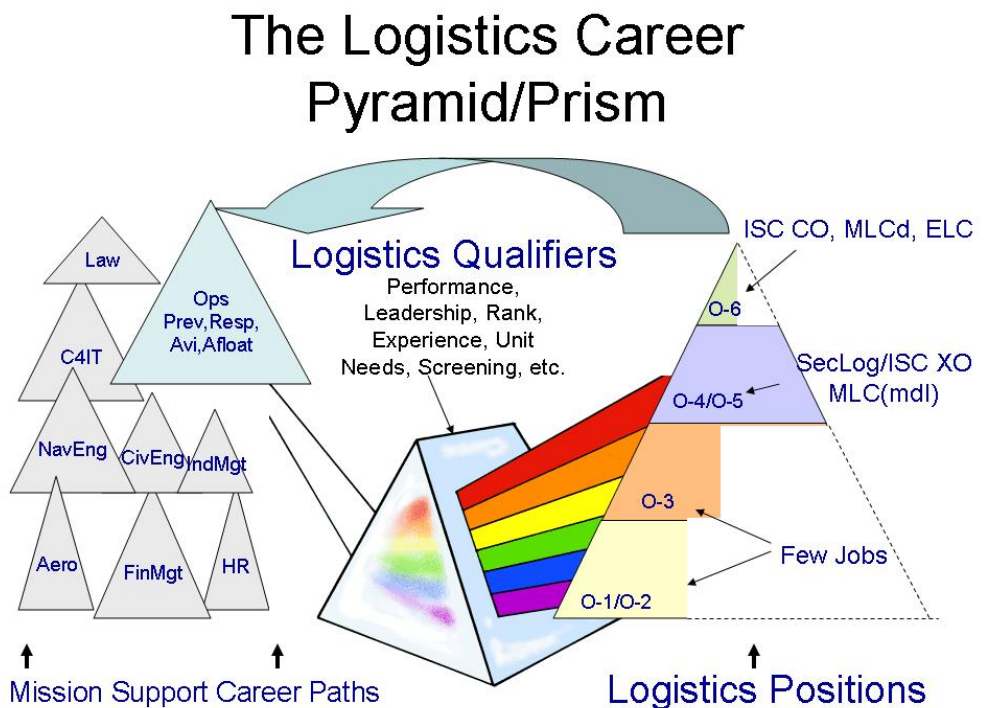


Fig 7 – The Logistics Career Prism/Pyramid

**Logistics Competencies**

As an officer assigned to a Sector logistics billet, you will perform a mix of duties as described above. Currently, logistics is considered a career broadening assignment that compliments other career fields. The role of logistics and what elements constitute a logistician’s professional development is subject to change as Sector logistics billets mature and our Logistics system transforms. The existing billet structure within Sectors is such that there are simply not enough billets to support a separate and dedicated career path. There are numerous billets which develop complementary competencies which can then be employed in a Sector

logistics billet including, but not limited to: legal, personnel, naval engineering, civil engineering, financial management, Command, Control, Communications, Computer and Information Technology (C4IT), as well as prevention and response experience.

When considering a Sector logistics assignment, keep in mind a diverse yet balanced approach to professional development. If you are in a legal billet, for example, and have spent the past several years assigned to a legal staff billet, then it might be an opportune time to consider seeking an assignment in a Sector logistics billet. After completion of a tour in a Sector logistics billet, officers should expect to return to their area of primary specialization.

By opening the Sector logistics billets to officers from a variety of specialties, the Coast Guard gains better alignment of operations and mission support functions. While the Sector Logistics Department is only responsible for providing organic support to the Sector, those officers who are career logisticians in other specialties bring valuable expertise to the Sector construct and make an important contribution to Sector operations. Moreover, a Sector tour provides officers that may not have had an opportunity to perform in an operational ashore command, the chance to work with customers they support in their primary specialty.

Officers who desire to remain competitive for future Sector assignments should gain as much exposure to Sector operations as is feasible. However, officers who have no previous operational experience prior to being assigned to a Logistics Department position should not expect a follow-on tour as a Sector Commander or Deputy.

## *Additional Information*

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### **Out-of-Specialty Tours**

Most officers in the Sector construct will develop a primary specialty (*e.g.*, response, marine inspection, *etc.*), which they pursue through tours with increasing responsibility. However, many also acquire a second specialty through advanced education or training (*e.g.*, financial management, legal, *etc.*), and often desire to rotate between their specialty and sub-specialty. This is a desirable career path that allows an officer to maintain proficiency in two areas. Occasionally, officers request to rotate between two operational specialties. This is normally not possible because the significant investment in training necessary to maintain both specialties would not allow for those officers to complete necessary staff tours, which enhance their professional growth. Consequently, there will be limited opportunities to vary operational tours outside of the Sector construct.

Many officers desire tours outside of their primary and sub-specialty (*e.g.*, congressional affairs, aide, Coast Guard Liaison Officer, *etc.*). These competitive tours are encouraged. Officers desiring to complete these rotational tours should review their career progression. It is generally best to apply for these billets when completing a tour in your primary operational specialty. This will enable you to go out-of-specialty and then return while still current. Out-of-specialty tours enhance an officer's professional expertise by providing one a broader understanding of the Coast Guard and how it functions as a maritime, multi-mission, military service.

### **Sector Planning, Intelligence, and Command Center Billets**

Planning, Intelligence, and Command Center billets offer an additional opportunity to gain Sector experience. After gaining experience in a primary specialization (aviation, afloat, reserve program administration (RPA), *etc.*), another assignment option to consider is a planning, intelligence, or command center billet at a Sector. Since these billets can be filled by officers from a variety of specialties, it is beneficial to work with an Assignment Officer in developing a strategy for integrating these out-of-specialty opportunities into your career path. Either type of billet represents an excellent opportunity to incorporate knowledge gained at past assignments into current Coast Guard operations. The knowledge gained during a Sector tour will add depth to an officer's portfolio of professional experiences. Officers will generally enter these billets at the Lieutenant or above level. Both areas are a small but vital piece of the Sector construct. A detailed description of the roles and responsibilities for Intelligence and Contingency Planning Staffs is provided in the *U.S. Coast Guard Sector Organizational Manual*, COMDTINST M5401.6 (series).

**The Screening Process**

The use of command screening panels to determine those officers best qualified to assume command is not a new or unique concept. It has been used for years in the afloat and aviation communities and provides critical input into the officer assignment process. Screening panels allow experienced senior officers the opportunity to identify officers ready for assignment as a commanding officer. The afloat and aviation communities have been well served by this process for years. Now, Sectors benefit from this same method that is time tested and trusted by the officer corps. CGPC-OPM will draw on the pool of successfully screened captains to make assignment recommendations to the respective assignment panels for all Sector Commanders. The actual assignments are made by the Captain Assignment Panel, which convenes annually in January. Captains and Captain selects who meet the eligibility criteria can compete for these billets through the screening process. The eligibility criteria for screening are published annually in COMDTINST 1401.5 (series) - *Schedule of Active Duty Promotion List (ADPL) and Inactive Duty Promotion List (IDPL) Officer Personnel Boards and Panels.*

The screening process selects the best qualified candidates to command Sectors and identifies personnel with demonstrated command potential. Since there are more candidates than anticipated vacancies, not all candidates who successfully screen will be assigned to command a Sector. The list is also used as a source for staffing leadership billets throughout the Coast Guard. Officers who do not successfully screen can continue to compete for promotion and leadership billets through higher level key staff assignment, or through assignment to a billet which does not require screening (*e.g.*, Deputy Sector Commander).

**Aviation Sectors**

Sectors that include aviation units may vary from the typical Sector construct staffing at the Command Cadre level. The Sector Commander, Deputy Sector Commander, Chief, Logistics Department or Chief, Response Department may specifically require a rated aviator. The particular composition of each Sector Command Cadre with an aviation component has been structured to meet the needs of its area of operations. Due to the limited number of Aviation Sectors and the unique assignment considerations, aviators interested in assignment to a Sector are encouraged to contact their assignment officer for further guidance.

**Executive Level (21+ years)**

Sector Commander billets are open to officers from all specialties with solid operational foundations. Although there are numerous opportunities to serve at a Sector, there are also competing Service needs for officers to continue in their primary specialty. The list of officers eligible to serve as Sector Commander is promulgated after convening a screening panel in the Fall of



each year. Leadership is the key criterion for selection of our Sector Commanders. Officers selected for Sector command cadre billets will represent the Coast Guard and oversee multi-agency operations across wide geographic areas. Their duties are more closely aligned to those of a District Commander than a single-unit commander. Their staffs include “subject matter experts” so that they are not expected to have in-depth experience and expertise in all of the missions they oversee. As Sector Commanders are reliant upon subject matter experts, in-depth expertise must be embedded throughout the Sector construct. Primary duties of the Sector Commander are public outreach, developing partnerships, fostering inter-agency cooperation, and overseeing the operational readiness, performance and professional development of their staff. Officers completing a command tour should anticipate an ensuing staff tour so the Coast Guard may benefit from the expertise and experiences gained in the command cadre billet.

Command at the field level today resembles the District Commander responsibilities of 15 years ago. The levels of outreach, international engagement, and interaction with the political process are unprecedented. Outreach skills, the ability to handle political pressures, and a firm grasp of complex Coast Guard deployments and legal authorities are key ingredients. Field commanders need the ability to effectively manage across skill sets. The bottom line is achieving the mission even though the Commander may not have all the skills in his/her own background. There are no preconceived notions on who can be a Sector Commander. Again, leadership is the key issue.

Sector Deputy billets are not screened billets and similar to the aviation and cutter fleet, provide an opportunity for strong Coast Guard leaders to integrate into the Sector environment. Sector Deputy Commander billets are also open to officers with solid operational foundations in all specialties.

**Good Luck!**

We hope you find this information useful in planning your career. We recognize how important the outcomes of assignment decisions are to each individual and to the Service. In closing, always focus on doing the best at your present job, whatever the task, and wherever the location. There are no “one-size-fits-all” answers in career planning; each person’s career takes unique twists and turns. The assignment of officers within the Sector construct is a dynamic and fluid process. We will continue to provide updates to this guide, as required, in the future.