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Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard

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COMDTINST 1554.2
9 MAR 2006

COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 1554.2

Subj: UNIT LEARNING CENTERS

1. PURPOSE. This Instruction provides guidelines for the establishment and operation of Learning Centers (LCs).

2. ACTION. Area and District commanders, commanders of maintenance and logistics commands, commanding officers of headquarters units, assistant commandants for directorates, Judge Advocate General, and special staff offices at Headquarters shall ensure compliance with the provisions of this Instruction. Internet release is authorized.

3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. None.

4. DISCUSSION.

   a. The Coast Guard recognizes the increasing value of the knowledge worker in the 21st Century, the rapid pace of change and the essential need to support life-long learning. In recent years, the funding devoted to Tuition Assistance has increased ten-fold and the participation rate has increased just as dramatically. Coast Guard culture needs to adjust to these changes as does our ability to support alternative education and training programs. Unit Learning Centers are a foundational piece to supporting these changes.

   b. E-Learning is a rapidly expanding, flexible and innovative means for the Coast Guard to accomplish the dynamic training and performance support required by our workforce. E-Learning is aligned with the Coast Guard's Strategic Plan, the DHS Human Capital Officer's strategic emphasis on distance learning, and the President's Management Agenda for e-Training. As one of the e-Coast Guard initiatives, e-Learning programs have already proved to be part of an effective supplement to the Coast Guard's more traditional methods for training its people. E-Learning in the Coast Guard currently takes on many forms that include: Online courses, self-help courseware, the Unit Leadership Development Program, General Mandated Training, web-based End Of Course Testing, and Electronic Performance Support Systems.

   c. There are three basic elements to an e-learning system: course delivery systems, a tracking tool and access devices.

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NON-STANDARD DISTRIBUTION:

      (1) Course delivery systems commonly known as Learning Content Management Systems (LCMS) are the server and software systems that deliver the courses, normally across the Internet. Universities, training organizations and the Coast Guard develop LCMS to deliver e-courses to students. The Coast Guard is in the process of procuring one or more LCMS to deliver custom Coast Guard course content via the Internet.

      (2) The tracking tools, known as Learning Management Systems (LMS), record a student's progress in the e-course and feed course completions and competency achievements into human resource databases (Direct Access within the Coast Guard). The Coast Guard has procured an LMS that will interface with Direct Access. Deployment is expected in FY08. In the interim, a small scale LMS is in place and some of the training results must be entered manually into Training Management Tool and Direct Access.

      (3) The e-learning access devices are computer work stations that connect to the LCMS and LMS generally through the Internet. This can be accomplished from the work desk-top, home computer or a community consolidation of computers with Internet access (e.g. at a Learning Center).

  d. Learning Centers support e-Learning by setting aside a dedicated space for e-Learning to occur. LCs supply the tools (computer work stations with Internet access and other equipment) that enable both professional and personal development including enhancing the opportunities for our members to pursue voluntary distance education activities and required e-training. The result is a more educated and capable workforce. LCs support instructor-led training at a distance, thereby reducing travel costs and days away for members in training while increasing the throughput for courses without costly use of "bricks and mortar" infrastructure.

  e. Several field efforts already exist that display innovative ways to meet the needs of the performer in the workplace and encourage lifelong learning. The LCs are locally developed and funded to use the centrally funded e-infrastructure (LCMS and LMS). Adherence to the Learning Center guidelines made available in CG Central and through this Instruction will further enable effective employment with the centrally funded and maintained LMS and LCMS, and will provide the robust tools to enable today's modern e-learning applications.

      (1) Supporting e-Learning by the establishment of LCs is best met by evaluating a locally determined level of need while exploring options regarding unit funding and local partnerships. Gift monies (e.g. Coast Guard Foundation via the Evergreen Fund) and local academic institutions are two examples of opportunities that may reduce the unit resource burden, but may require additional administrative concerns such as the construction of multi-year Memorandums of Understanding (see Memoranda of Understanding/Agreement, COMDTINST 5216.18 (series) for procedures for developing Interagency Agreements). Local commanders are encouraged to explore and share lessons learned for the benefit of others using a collaborative environment (CG Central Microsite or other means) to be established by the Coast Guard's e-Learning Program Manager (CG-132).

      (2) The most robust Learning Centers combine many aspects of learning with the e-learning application. Those activities include: test proctoring, tutoring, college classrooms, video and audio teleconferencing, academic and career counseling and study hall facilities. The local Education Services Officer may locate the ESO office in or near the LC. Minimum standards for Learning Centers include the enclosed requirements for hardware and software in a quiet environment, with adequate space for student learning.

5. <u>POLICY</u>.

    a. Local commands can purchase Coast Guard Standard Workstation (CGSW) equipment using the Commandant (CG-63) managed contract, or purchase non-standard equipment and software in the establishment of a LC. The benefit of purchasing from the Commandant (CG-63) managed contract is that ESU support will be available for that equipment and software. For equipment <u>not</u> purchased using the Commandant (CG-63) contract, the unit will be responsible for all maintenance, support, and recapitalization resource requirements for both hardware and operating software and connection to CGDN will not be allowed. The trade-off for each alternative must be evaluated locally based on the needs of the intended users, typically determined with the help of the local ESO. While the CGSW provides an ample hardware and software base for all CG-mandated learning activities, some voluntary education opportunities may be better served by integrating more robust capabilities, such as instant messaging or a high-speed internet connection purchased locally (i.e. members are prohibited from using instant messaging over CGDN). LC efforts outside the CGSW and/or CGDN infrastructure may result in the establishment of an account with a local internet provider at unit expense and contracting out maintenance for equipment and software not purchased through the Commandant (CG-63) contract.

    b. Initial guidance on LC establishment is enclosed. The Policy and Program Information Channel on CG Central portal will be used as the primary method for updating this information. (Go to the Learning Tab, then e-Learning Channel and click on Policy and Program Information.) Commandant (CG-132) is also responsible for managing the collaborative environment to share lessons learned regarding the establishment of LCs.

6. <u>ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS</u>. Environmental considerations were examined in the development of this Instruction and have been determined to be not applicable.

7. <u>FORMS/REPORTS</u>. None.

                                KENNETH T. VENUTO /s/
                                Assistant Commandant for Human Resources

Encl: (1) Learning Center initial guidance

Objective	Expand the availability of e-Learning for CG Training and Support and provide a set of technical standards for Learning Center (LC) equipment.
Roles and Responsibilities	When unit resources are available, Commanding Officers and Officers-In-Charge are encouraged to use these guidelines when establishing an LC. Unit Education Services Officers (ESOs) are typically tasked with coordinating the development, use and management of LCs, which should include collecting LC usage data. A sample position description is available from the Coast Guard Institute and is posted on CG Central. Partnering with local CG Auxiliary may be one alternative to staffing busy LCs. Auxiliary members can serve as watchstanders, collect usage data and assist users in a variety of ways. Servicing ESUs can assist as consultants to this endeavor. CG-132 is responsible for coordinating inter-LC collaboration and providing consulting services for LC development.
Policy	Commands should establish site-specific policies through local instructions to ensure that LCs promote a positive learning environment and that students use government computers and internet access in accordance with CI5375.1 (series), CI5230.2 (series), CIM5500.13 (series), and CIM5500.17. Commands are encouraged to collaborate with units that have existing LCs to share local policies and implementation issues. Units should keep a record of LC users. Tracking the reasons for LC use is also recommended as this data may be useful in subsequent resource justification actions.
Priority of Users	At commands where demand for LC use indicates, the CO may wish to establish a hierarchy of authorized users such as: 1. Active Duty, Selected Reserve, Civilian Employees and Auxiliarists without computer and/or internet access. 2. All members with computer and/or internet access who require LC access to perform tasks not capable from non-LC workstations (e.g. e-Testing). 3. Family members without computer and/or internet access.
Funding and Costs	Units choosing to install an LC bear all the costs for equipment acquisition, installation, maintenance, and operation. Partnering with local academic institutions may be an alternative to establishing a stand-alone LC. For CG solutions, costs will vary greatly depending upon the LC configuration. Units are encouraged to investigate funding alternatives including CG Foundation and other locally available gifts.
Computer and Physical Security	The integrity of data, learning records, and any test results is foundational to successful e-Learning. The ESO (or other individual designated in writing) should be responsible for the security of the unit LC. Proctored e-Testing, if required, shall be conducted in accordance with current testing procedures promulgated by the Coast Guard Institute (http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi/)

Space	The space dedicated to an LC should be available exclusively for LC use. The LC should be able to accommodate 5 percent of the total number of people at a unit. This is scaleable as even an undersized LC still has value. Approximately 16 square feet should be allocated for each Learning Center workstation (LCW). Traffic aisles, privacy considerations, utilities, and facilitator spaces should be added to this figure.
Utilities	Commands should ensure servicing facilities or civil engineering staff have calculated the utility service the LC requires. Air-conditioning versus heat load should be carefully managed. Depending on the number and type of computers used, there may be a significant draw on existing HVAC systems. Installation activities should be coordinated with local ESU/ESDs.
Location	The optimal location for the LC is a quiet, well-lighted, adequately secure location near work spaces (but not in them), or in barracks areas, that is readily accessible to the workforce. LCs "off reservation" to accommodate teleworking is another alternative that may be considered.
LC Workstation (LCW)	Units may use standard or non-standard workstations; there are pros and cons to both. <table><tr><th>Workstation Type</th><th>Pluses</th><th>Minuses</th></tr><tr><td>Standard Workstations</td><td> - Supported by CG-6, MLCs, ESU, TISCOM. - Known configurations. - Robust security. - Able to connect via CGDN+. </td><td> - Nonstandard software may need to be certified by TISCOM. - Additional support costs will be figured into procurement costs. - The "small scale LMS" may not pass certification by TISCOM. </td></tr><tr><td>Nonstandard Workstations</td><td> - Procurement time may be slightly shorter. - No restrictions on software installations. </td><td> - No support other than at unit or through commercial computer shops. - May be incompatible with eventual LCMS and LMS procured by CG-1. - Installation of LCMS and LMS across Coast Guard may be more difficult as each workstation will have a different configuration. Cannot connect to Internet via CGDN+, unit will have to procure an ISP and either use dial-up or get a high-speed connection.</td></tr></table>

LC Workstation (LCW) (cont'd)	• Coast Guard Standard Workstations (CGSWSs) are workstations purchased using the CG-63 standard computer contract and running the Coast Guard Standard Image plus any Local Configuration Control Board (LCCB) approved applications. Units can expect ESU/ESD support for CGSWs. A supported connection to the intranet, as well as to the internet, and most recommended software are included in the Standard Image. Any non-standard software will require a waiver from the LCCB prior to installation. CGSWSs limit download speeds to 400 kbps due to current CG Data Network (CGDN) limitations, which rules out streaming media and transferring of large files. • Non-standard LCWs are purchased either using the CG-63 standard computer contract <u>or</u> commercially, but <u>not</u> running the CG Standard Image. If units decide to exercise this option, they should <u>not</u> expect ESU/ESD support. Local commands assume the burden of system administration, maintenance, and recapitalization for non-standard LCWs. Extended 3 to 5 year warranties for non-standard hardware are strongly encouraged to protect the investment. Contract support to manage the LC network, security, and administration is recommended. Separately funded internet access, at unit expense, allows chat software and other applications that may facilitate more robust e-Learning. Higher access speeds than available through the CGDN will also allow faster and larger downloads. To ensure capability that meets current e-learning application technical requirements, all non-standard LCWs should include at a minimum: Microsoft Windows XP Operating System, Microsoft Office Professional 2003, Microsoft Internet Explorer 6.0, Flash 7.0 Player, Macromedia Shockwave 8.5 Player, Windows Media Player 9.0 Player, Adobe Acrobat 6.0, and Real Media Player 10.0. If units wish to later convert LCW hardware purchased using the CG-63 contract to a CGSW, they will need to purchase and install the Standard Image and coordinate recurring maintenance costs with their local ESD/ESU. All LCWs shall be equipped with up-to-date anti-virus, pop-up, and firewall protection. The current Standard Image anti-virus is Symantec Anti-Virus and Windows SP2 for pop-up blocking. Because of the way media is used in e-Learning, each LCW requires a minimum connection of 200kbps. LCWs should have adequate graphics cards, sound cards, and headphones. Ideally, one computer would have speakers, or be connected to a sound system for group presentations.
Peripheral Equipment	Suggestions include a networked projection system (for larger LCs), FAX machine, printers (1 for every 10 LCWs), a copy machine (for LCs with more than 10 LCWs), and telephones with speaker phone capability and headsets. Some units may install video teleconferencing equipment in the LC to facilitate a distance meeting capability.