

Army CBRN Warrant Officer Program Takes Off

By Mr. R.J. Oriez

Noncommissioned officers with Military Occupational Specialty 74D now have the opportunity to become warrant officers with the designation of *chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) technician*.

According to Ms. Lisa Merrill—chief of the Individual Training Division, Directorate of Training and Leader Development, U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School (USACBRNS)—to be eligible as a CBRN technician, noncommissioned officers must—

- Hold the rank of staff sergeant or above.
- Have completed the Basic Noncommissioned Officer or Advanced Leader Course.
- Have 8–12 years of active service (including 5 years of military occupational specialty experience).
- Have a baseline skilled technical (ST) score of 100.
- Be recommended by the appropriate chain of command.

Additional requirements are listed at <http://www.usarec.army.mil/warrant>. Those noncommissioned officers selected for the CBRN Warrant Officer Program will attend the 10-week Marine Corps Basic CBRN Defense Officer's Course held at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, beginning in June 2011.

Marine Chief Warrant Officer George Lawson stated that chemical warrant officers have been a part of the Marine Corps for more than 20 years and that formal chemical warrant officer training began in 1996. The Army plans to take advantage of that Marine experience. "The Army leadership—the [USACBRNS] commandant and other leaders—have worked with Marine warrants over the course of time and are impressed with the level of expertise they bring," Ms. Merrill said. Chief Warrant Officer Lawson added, "These are two services coming together and doing multiservice training without any directions or funding from the Joint Staff."

While the Basic CBRN Defense Officer's Course will remain a Marine Corps program, the Army will also provide instructors to help with the increased number of students. "We haven't determined what the makeup of the Army instructors will be initially," Merrill said. "Later, we may be contributing warrant officers."

Upon completing the course, the new warrant officers will be filling billets formerly held by lieutenants. "There are identified positions which we [had] second lieutenants in," Merrill said. "They determined they'd be better served by a warrant officer, with that level of expertise, in those positions; for example—a CBRN officer in a field artillery or a military intelligence battalion." Ms. Merrill went on to say that the intelligence staff officer (S-2) is the only chemical battalion position that will be filled by a warrant officer.

As a warrant officer's career advances, other positions will become available. Chief warrant officers three and higher could find themselves working on explosive ordnance disposal, with technical escort battalions, or at the USACBRNS.

"[The CBRN Warrant Officer Program] is not just good for the [USACBRNS] or for the Chemical Corps. It is also to enhance the skill sets [of] units because they will be more fully developed with more experience and more technical background," said Merrill.



Mr. Oriez is a member of the Fort Leonard Wood Guidon staff.