

THE NCO SUPPORT CHANNEL

The NCO support channel is subordinate to and supportive of the chain of command. The NCO support channel is not an independent channel. It is incumbent on the users of this channel to ensure that the chain of command is kept informed of actions implemented through the NCO support channel and to eliminate the possibility of the NCO support channel operating outside of command policy and directives. Problems should be brought to the attention of the chain of command and resolved through a coordinated effort. Since the NCO support channel should be operating in accordance with established command policy and directives, conflicts should be minimal and easily resolved.

Prior to 1977 the NCO support channel was regarded as informal. However, AR 600-20 formalized the NCO support channel and expanded its functions in December 1976. The NCO support channel is now directive in nature within established policies and orders. Because of this, commanders are seeing the senior NCO more actively participating in all unit activities and tasks. The NCO support channel (leadership chain) parallels and reinforces the chain of command. NCO leaders work with and support the commissioned and warrant officers of their chain of command.

In units at the battalion level and higher, the NCO support channel is the communication and supervision that begins with the command sergeant major (CSM), extends through first sergeants and platoon sergeants and ends with section chiefs, squad leaders, or team leaders. ***In addition to passing information, this channel is used for executing the commander's orders and getting routine, but important, jobs done.*** Most often it is used to put into effect policies and procedures and to enforce standards of performance, training, appearance and conduct.

The connection between the chain of command and the NCO support channel is the senior NCO. Commanders issue orders through the chain of command, but senior NCOs must know and understand the orders to issue effective implementing instructions through the NCO support channel. Although the first sergeant and command sergeants major are not part of the formal chain of command, leaders should consult them on individual soldier matters.

Successful officers have a good leader and NCO relationship with their first sergeants and command sergeants major. This leaves the commander free to plan, make decisions and program future training and operations. The need for such a relationship applies to platoon leaders and platoon sergeants as well as to staff officers and NCOs. Senior NCOs have extensive experience in successfully completing missions and dealing with enlisted soldier issues. Also, senior NCOs can monitor organizational activities at all levels, take corrective action to keep the organization within the boundaries of the commander's intent, or report situations that require the attention of the officer leadership. ***Regardless of where the information or task begins – in the chain of command or in the NCO support channel – keep the counterpart informed.*** A positive relationship between officers and NCOs creates conditions for success.

The NCO support channel assists the chain of command in accomplishing the following:

- Transmitting, instilling and ensuring the efficacy of the professional Army ethic.
- Planning and conducting the day-to-day unit operations within prescribed policies and directives.
- Training enlisted soldiers in their MOS as well as in the basic skills and attributes of a soldier.
- Supervising unit physical fitness training and ensuring that soldiers comply with the weight and appearance standards in AR 600-9 and AR 670-1.
- Teaching soldiers the history of the Army, to include military customs, courtesies and traditions.
- Caring for individual soldiers and their families both on and off duty.
- Teaching soldiers the mission of the unit and developing individual training programs to support the mission.
- Accounting for and maintaining individual arms and equipment of enlisted soldiers and unit equipment under their control.
- Administering and monitoring the NCO professional development program and other unit training programs.
- Achieving and maintaining Army Values.
- Advising the commander on rewards and punishment for enlisted soldiers.

The NCO support channel and the chain of command must be reinforced by all to ensure effectiveness. It is the channel of communication and supervision from the command sergeant major to the most junior enlisted soldier in the unit. Commanders may further specify responsibilities and authority of their NCOs to their staffs and subordinates. Your contribution to the NCO support channel ensures its overall success.

"...the routine daily business of the Army is noncommissioned officer business, that is to say, execution of established policies and standards pertaining to the performance, training and conduct of enlisted personnel is the responsibility of the Noncommissioned Officer Corps. The establishment of those policies and standards is the responsibility of the officer corps." CSM J. F. La Voie