THE STANDSGRAM

APU OPERATOR PROGRAM

By CW5 Kylene Lewis, DES Assault Branch Maintenance Evaluator



Aircraft Auxiliary Power Unit (APU) Operator Program

APU operators provide line companies, maintenance companies, and support battalions with flexibility when troubleshooting aircraft faults, executing maintenance operational checks, and other maintenance operations. APU Operator Programs reduce the need to find a pilot or crewmember (CH-47 only) to run the APU. When codified and managed properly, a unit's APU program can increase maintenance efficiency, decrease maintenance downtime, and increase overall maintainer proficiency.

AR 95-1, paragraph 3-19(d) gives Commanders the authority to have an APU Operator Program:

"Commanders may authorize personnel to start, operate, and stop auxiliary power units. These persons will –

1. Undergo appropriate normal and emergency procedures training conducted by an IP/SP/ME/FI/SI/IO/SO in the specific mission type, design, and series of aircraft.
2. Be evaluated annually by an IP/SP/ME/FI/SI/IO/SO as appropriate on all functions they are required to perform.
3. Have written authorization from the commander. This approval must specify the operations and checks permitted."

Non-rated crew members (NRCM) who perform NRCM duties and have Task 1202 (CH-47) or Task 1108 (UH-60) on their Commander's Task List (CTL) will be trained and evaluated IAW the applicable Aircrew Training Manual (ATM). For all other maintainers, a maintenance APU operator training program meeting the requirements stated above must be established locally. This program is typically included in a unit's Aviation Branch Operations SOP (ABOS) with local procedures in Chapter 2 - Aircrew Training Program, or Chapter 3 – Additional Training Requirements.

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A unit's APU Operators Program should include a breakdown of required training and training documentation. Training should include the following topics at a minimum:

- Forms and records checks prior to APU start
- Preflight IAW the applicable operator's manual/checklist
- APU system characteristics and requirements
- APU operational procedures to include start and shutdown procedures
- APU limitations
- APU and related systems emergency procedures

While not required, a DA Form 4507, Crew Member Grade Slip, may be used to track APU Operator Training. Upon completion of training, the training should be documented in AMAP on DA Form 7817, Aviation Maintenance Training Record.

The APU Operator Program should codify a timeline for maintenance operator annual evaluations and consider establishing APU Operator currency requirements. Both objectives can be achieved by mirroring aircrew standards—specifically, establishing an annual evaluation window modeled after the Annual Proficiency and Readiness Test (APART) and introducing a currency requirement akin to Night Vision Goggle (NVG) or Night Vision System (NVS) currency. Commanders must decide whether currency requirements apply to NRCMs integrated into the Aircrew Training Program.

Approval for APU operations remains at the discretion of the Commander. Under AR 95-1, paragraph 2-2(e), the chain of command must approve all aviation operations, defined as any operation intended to start main aircraft engines. Should the Commander choose to establish an approval process, they can streamline it via verbal authorization paired with a local tracking ledger. Additionally, Commanders should consider delegating this approval authority to maintenance test pilots.

A well-managed APU Operator Program significantly enhances unit maintenance efficiency and flexibility by enabling trained maintainers to conduct APU operations without relying on pilots. However, the fundamental responsibility for establishing and maintaining a sound program rests squarely with the Commander, who exercises the authority under AR 95-1 to authorize and oversee these operations. To fulfill this mandate safely, Commanders must codify local procedures that enforce rigorous training standards and require annual evaluations.



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