

What is Good NBC Training?

By LT Stephen M. Zachar

NBC training can be many things. The challenge for the junior chemical officer is to know what good NBC training is and is not.

Is NBC training a task or a condition? When should it be individual or collective? Who should be the principle NBC trainer? These questions must be answered and well understood before the junior chemical officer can plan and supervise good NBC training in the unit.

At my first assignment after COBC, a commander in my unit thought that good NBC training meant having his unit do police call in MOPP4. This MOPP4 training and a semiannual common skills NBC training session was the extent of the unit's NBC training. The same held true for the other three subordinate units, too.

The local regulations required a minimum of MOPP4 training and NBC common task training. The commanders had complied with the regulations. My challenge was to teach the commanders what constituted good NBC training and how to develop an effective NBC training program. To do this I looked at four areas:

- Battle focus training.
- Individual versus collective training.
- Task versus condition.
- Leader training.

Battle Focus

Battle focus is a concept used to derive peacetime training requirements from wartime missions. An important part of battle focus training is the connection between collective mission-essential tasks and the supporting individual tasks. All individual NBC tasks you choose should directly support your unit's mission-essential task list (METL). Individual NBC training is the starting point for your NBC training program. If your individual NBC training does not support the unit METL, you will never be able to integrate NBC training into your unit's collective training. At my unit the NBC training was isolated from the overall unit training. Individual NBC training was the whole NBC program instead of just the starting point.

Individual versus Collective Training

NBC training is both individual and collective. NBC common task training is not the only individual level training. The units I worked for deployed in small separate elements. Each element needed specially trained personnel to do NBC warning and reporting/plotting procedures and to supervise decon operations. This required extensive individual skills training beyond the CTT level. Decontamination operations, hasty and deliberate, was the one collective

task that the entire unit needed to train. CTT, special teams, and specific NBC collective tasks must all be battle focused to support the unit's METL.

Task versus Condition

Identifying and training specific NBC individual and collective tasks are not the only way your NBC program can support the unit's METL. Other than unit level decon operations, there are few other collective NBC tasks that support the METL. This is why it is important to train NBC as a condition; not just a task. For example, MOPP4 training at the individual level does little to improve your unit's ability to do its mission in an NBC environment. If instead of making MOPP4 the training task, you trained on a METL task with the training condition being "in a contaminated environment," the soldiers would be doing NBC training that directly supports the mission.

When NBC is used as a training condition, it is instantly integrated into the unit's collective training and directly supports the unit METL. A unit's monthly training schedule might not show one NBC task being trained; however, the training may focus on using NBC as the condition.

The unit may be receiving much better NBC training than if they trained on specified NBC tasks only. At my unit NBC was seen as a separate

training task. So it was never integrated beyond the individual task level. The commanders always made sure that the required quarterly NBC training was on the monthly training schedule. You could count on seeing the familiar NBC common task training, or see the whole company wandering around in MOPP4 doing daily routine tasks.

Leader Training

The best way to implement an integrated NBC program is through the leaders. It was evident at my unit that the leaders were not involved. I found that the chemical NCO at each subordinate unit did all the NBC training. The platoon sergeants, leaders, and company commanders were not involved.

When NBC training was scheduled, the soldiers were given to the chemical NCO to be trained and the key leaders would go about their business. Rarely did the soldiers receive NBC training during regular platoon training.

During FTXs, the units couldn't successfully perform METL tasks in an NBC environment, but the soldiers did very well on individual NBC tasks. The solution was not to have the chemical NCO train the platoons on their METL tasks in an NBC setting. The chemical NCO usually didn't have the expertise to do the platoons sergeant's job of METL training, but the chemical NCO could train the platoon sergeants/leaders on NBC operations. Then the platoon sergeants/leaders were able to integrate the supporting NBC operations into their normal METL training. The chemical NCO then was used to monitor training and to advise the leaders on operations in the NBC setting.

The key is to have the commander directly involved. He must understand that NBC is trained as a condition as well as a task, and that to fully integrate NBC into training, the leaders must be trained and they must become the principle NBC trainers. Don't isolate your NBC training outside normal

unit training by making it a special event trained by special trainers. Make NBC a training condition used by all leaders during all METL training.

Remember, when planning an NBC training program, look at all the areas discussed: battle focus, task versus condition, individual and collective training, and leader training. Then the challenges of NBC training should be easily and successfully met. Good Luck.

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Smoke/Obscurants Symposium XVI

The Smoke/Obscurants Symposium XVI will be held 14-16 April 1992 at the Kossiakoff Conference and Education Center, The Johns Hopkins University, Laurel, Maryland. The theme of the Symposium is "Smoke, the Margin of Victory."

Topics to be presented are Smoke Systems and Materials, Modeling, Operational Uses, Health or Environmental Effects, Desert Storm Lessons, Countermeasures, Nonmilitary Applications, Data Analysis, Data Assessment and Evaluation, Camouflage, Concealment, Deception, Natural Obscurants, and Electromagnetic Systems Performance.

The Symposium is sponsored by the U.S. Army Chemical Research, Development, and Engineering Center, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. Members of the Department of Defense, industry, academia, and allied nations are invited to submit papers up to and including the SECRET level on the aforementioned topics. The abstract deadline is 15 January 1992.

For further information contact Judy Cole, Symposium Coordinator (804) 865-7604 and telefax (804) 865-8721 or Walter Klimek, Symposium Chairman (301) 671-2494, DSN 584-2494 or telefax (301) 671-3471.