PERSCOM Notes

By Sergeant Major Theressa J. Fillmore

Communication

Communication is the key to working with the Engineer Branch on assignment and professional-development issues. It is critical to keep an active dialogue between you, your command, and this branch. Communication gives us advance notice of your concerns, such as readiness, pending operational deletions and deferments, commanding-general/general-officer interest, structure changes, personal wishes, and anything else that could have an impact on the assignment process.

There are many ways of communicating with your assignments branch: a telephone; personal letters; the Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS); branch field visits; e-mail, newsletters; a fax machine; personal visits; PERSGRAMs; PERSCOM Online; and the Department of the Army (DA) Form 4187, *Request for Personnel Action*. All of these methods help us stay in touch, but some are better than others.

The best way for a soldier to communicate with the Engineer Branch is to submit a DA Form 4187 with the recommendation or concurrence of the chain of command. We require that most 4187s be processed through the entire chain. While we appreciate courtesy copies, they only provide advance notice of a pending action and add to our paperwork. Although we do accept faxed requests when operating within a shortened timeframe, most personnel actions do not require faxing. Remember, faxed personnel requests must include the recommendations and concurrences from the required level of command, or we will not take final action.

The e-mail option, while often used, does not keep the chain of command informed of a soldier's actions. For this reason, we do not consider e-mail requests official except in certain cases, such as replies to Homebase/Advance Assignment Program (HAAP) changes generated by the branch. However, we do reply to e-mails as quickly as possible. These inquires must include your full name, rank, and primary military occupational specialty (PMOS), but do not include your social security number.

We welcome personal visits to PERSCOM. Although advance notice is not required, it is helpful to ensure that your assignments manager or professional-development noncommissioned officer (PDNCO) is available.

We also encourage telephone calls and personal letters. In the Engineer Branch, we believe that soldiers should have input in their future. When calling, we need your name, rank, and PMOS to quickly connect you with the correct assignments manager and/or PDNCO.

Soldiers primarily use the IVRS (1-800-FYI-EPMD [394-3763]) to determine if they are on assignment instructions. However, it also gives information on schools, retention management, and other enlisted topics. You need a touch-tone telephone to use the IVRS and must provide your social security number.

Branch field visits usually are scheduled at the request of the installation or major command. We conduct these visits to keep the field informed of engineer and Army issues and to conduct face-to-face interviews with the soldiers we serve.

PERSCOM Online (*http://www-.perscom.-army.mil*) is a PERSCOM Web site. The Engineer Branch maintains a portion of the site with assignments, promotions, and other data available for engineer soldiers. It is a good source of information on special assignment qualifications—such as drill sergeant, recruiter, Active Component/Reserve Component—and where engineer MOSs are authorized. The site also includes the telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of all branch personnel in the Enlisted Engineer Branch. The majority of PERSCOM Online has information relevant to all soldiers, not just engineers.

Last, but not least, is the HQDA PERSGRAM, which is used to notify soldiers of PERSCOM-generated actions such as assignments and schools.

As you can see, there are many ways to communicate with your branch. These avenues are open to leaders and soldiers, and we highly encourage you to use them. We can't know everything that may impact on your next assignment or school unless you or your leaders tell us. The sooner we know, the better. You do not have to wait until you are on assignment instructions to get in touch with us.

MYTH: If you call DA, your next orders will be to Korea.

FACT: While Korea is a valuable assignment, we do not place soldiers on any particular assignment just because they called.

Your voice in the professional-development and assignment process is important to us. The following site on PERSCOM Online provides the telephone numbers and e-mail addresses to contact your branch assignment managers and PDNCOs: *http://www.-perscom.army.mil/EPeng/engdir.htm.*

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