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## Frequently Asked Questions:

- **What do Chemical Officers do?**

Chemical Officers are the resident experts on all things related to CBRN defense. In staff positions, they advise the commander how to safely operate in a CBRN environment and how to employ CBRN enablers in support of maneuver forces and to protect the force. In leadership positions (PL, CO CDR, etc.), Chemical Officers lead CBRN Soldiers on the battlefield in with operational support tasks such as mounted and dismounted CBRN reconnaissance, counter WMD, and decontamination/mitigation. Chemical Officers are often responsible for a variety of tasks and aim to be proficient in a broad spectrum of disciplines. This is a natural result of being widely dispersed across the Army. They work side-by-side with other branches in the operations section of any given unit. They often take on high visibility tasks such as training and operations planners; protection cell advisors; range OICs; and deployment planners. Here's a great article that talks all about being a new Chemical Officer:

<http://companyleader.themilitaryleader.com/2018/05/23/chemical-corps/>

- **What is the best part about being a Chemical Officer?**

As a Chemical Officer, you are part of a small, but elite Corps, made up of technical experts who are operational warriors first. We are assigned as the resident CBRN experts across almost every type of unit at almost every echelon across the Army and Joint Force. We have diverse opportunities along our career path to serve with all Services; interagency partners such as the CIA, FBI, Department of Energy/State/Homeland Defense, White House Military Office; and CBRN international partners across the world. Our training and job experiences set our Officers up to be highly marketable across a wide spectrum of employment opportunities in the private and public civilian sectors. And finally, because we are a small Branch, we are a tight Family and look after each other, building life-long relationships with people we serve with multiple times throughout a career. No other Branch is like ours and no other Branch offers all these things combined for their Officers.

- **Do I need a STEM degree?**

A STEM degree is NOT required to be a successful CBRN officer. Current leaders in the branch come from a wide variety of backgrounds (e.g. LTG Leslie Smith, BA Accounting). Many facets of an officer's education come into play, not just the area of emphasis. Experiences and personal talent sets of all types can bring much to the organization. It is the job of the branch to make new Officers into CBRN defense experts, and we do that

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very well.

- **What should I expect at CBRN BOLC?**

We typically seek between 150-200 new 2LTs each year coming from all commissioning sources, all of whom then go on to attend the CBRN Basic Officer Leader Course (BOLC) at Fort Leonard Wood, MO. During BOLC, CBRN lieutenants are trained in the basics of CBRN reconnaissance, decontamination, hazardous materials (HAZMAT), and Homeland Security matters. CBRN lieutenants will also receive combined arms training in the Maneuver Support Center's Battle Simulation Center. This training allows Officers to plan tactical operations, fight the enemy, and improve leadership skills utilizing high-tech, state-of-the-art equipment. It provides a good doctrinal foundation for the next few assignments a Chemical Officer will have.

- **What specialty schools, certifications, and additional training are available?**

All Chemical Officers receive foundational HAZMAT certifications as part of their training. There are also additional schools a Chemical Officer can attend such as CBRN Recon (L6), Dismounted Recon, and Technical Escort (L3). These schools are great opportunities for an officer to take his/her technical expertise to the next level, and some are required for certain leadership positions.

- **How can being a Chemical Officer improve my employment opportunities after the Army?**

The Chemical Corps provides a great foundation for a future career in a wide variety of fields, including emergency management, HAZMAT, environmental management, industrial health & safety, as well as a variety of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The certifications that Chemical Officers receive make them very marketable to the civilian side. Our foundational tenets of hazard assessment, protection, and mitigation that you will learn at BOLC and practice at your first duty assignment easily translate into principles you could apply in numerous civilian disciplines and will set you apart from your peers.

- **Do Chemical Officers have opportunities to get Masters Degrees and participate in Higher Education Programs?**

The CBRN School provides two masters tracks during the Captain Career Course (CCC) for those interested in higher education: MS, Environmental Science from Webster University; and MS, Defense and Strategic Studies/Countering-WMD from Missouri State University. Other opportunities for advanced degrees specific to the Chemical Branch may occur later in the career timeline in the form of Advanced Civilian Schooling (ACS) such as at Tufts University and Emory University. The following article describes some of





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these programs in detail:

[https://home.army.mil/wood/application/files/8716/2627/8844/HIGHER\\_ED\\_-\\_CBRN.pdf](https://home.army.mil/wood/application/files/8716/2627/8844/HIGHER_ED_-_CBRN.pdf)

- **Can I attend Ranger School, Airborne, Air Assault as a Chemical Officer?**  
Ranger school selection is not automatic for Chemical Officers, but there are a few slots provided every year. The selection process usually occurs during BOLC, and historically has been competitive. Ranger-qualified Chemical Officers will have opportunities to serve in the Ranger Regiment as staff Officers, so they will complete the Ranger Assessment and Selection Program, participate in deployments, etc. Other training, like Airborne and Air Assault School, is offered as required by the unit.
- **Will I have the opportunity to conduct scientific research as an officer in the Chemical Corps?**  
Chemical Officers are not lab technicians or scientists per se, so formal academic research opportunities are not common in the Chemical Branch. Most CBRN-related research is contracted and managed through organizations such as the United States Army Research Laboratory at Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD. CBRN Officers do have opportunities to work with civilian scientists and researchers in organizations such as the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, opening up future career opportunities.
- **What can I expect as a Chemical Platoon Leader**  
Leading a small tactical CBRN unit as a Platoon leader or CBRN Response Team leader is one of the most important experiences a new Chemical officer can have early in his/her career. Leading and working directly with Soldiers is invigorating, challenging, and rewarding. Officers in these positions have the ability to directly shape unit readiness, build a cohesive team, and take on important and exciting CBRN related missions in direct support of operational and strategic level objectives. It is not uncommon to receive a critical real-world mission with your unit while in those positions. Naturally, these spots are competitive, so it's crucial that young officers perform well in whatever task they are assigned in order to open up opportunities to serve in those roles.
- **What can I expect if I get Branch Detailed?**  
Branch detailed Officers spend their LT time in one MOS with the chance to change paths back to their control branch later as a CPT. Branch details are now voluntary, and are a good way for officers to gain a broad base of experience before going into another field they are interested in. Many branch detailed officers decide to stay Chemical after their first unit of assignment through the Voluntary Transfer Incentive Program (VTIP). Use this

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link for a more in depth look at what the branch detail experience is like:

<https://juniorofficer.army.mil/reflection-branch-detail-program>

- **Can you tell me about 'USR' and additional duties?**

The Unit Status Report (USR) is often assigned to the Chemical officer as an additional responsibility. This is a tremendous opportunity! USR is very important, and commanders pay close attention to how this is conducted. Chemical Officers with this task benefit from getting a higher level of direct interaction with their commanders by serving as the USR officer, and this usually goes a long way toward earning other responsibilities later on (such as XO and Company Command). USR is a task that forward thinkers take on with an understanding of how valuable that task can be to themselves and the organization.

- **Can I interview to become a Chemical Officer?**

Currently, the majority of interviews are conducted online through HireVue.com, and all Cadets have the ability to request an interview through their HireVue account. Your cadet training and education is more than adequate preparation for the interview. Cadets should do their best to present themselves well with thoughtful, sincere answers as this is your chance to show the evaluation team that you are a serious candidate. The window for interviews will span a few weeks, allowing the evaluation team to help individuals determine if the Chemical Corps is right for them. 2021 HireVue Interview Link:

<https://unitedstatesarmy.hirevue.com/signup/x7TareDQVHCzsk7ieLVMJC/>

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