

MILPERSMAN 1730 - 010

Use of Lay Leaders in Religious Services

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Governing Directives	SECNAVINST 1730.3G SECNAVINST 1730.7A
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Policy	Commanding officers may appoint a lay leader to supplement the personnel resources necessary to meet identified religious rights and needs.
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Appointment	The appointment, in writing, helps the command to meet the requirement to provide for the free exercise of religion by all personnel of the command. The appointment responds to an identified need and conveys no ecclesiastical status to the servicemember appointed.
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Terms of Appointment	Appointment by command implies the authority to terminate such appointment and remove an individual from participation in a leadership role in the command religious program. Ordinarily, the appointment ends when a particular need no longer exists, e.g., at the end of an underway period or when the lay leader is transferred. Also, the command will terminate the appointment when the conduct of the individual hinders accomplishment of the command religious program or reflects adversely upon the command.
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Responsibilities	The lay leader primarily assists in obtaining the services of a chaplain or ordained civilian clergy, or, when this is not possible or practical, assists in arranging a "church party" to an appropriate service in the vicinity. Lacking these opportunities, the lay leader provides a service consistent with his or her lay status. The command should facilitate lay leader training by a chaplain or other qualified clergy.
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Distinctions	Lay-led divine services are integral to the command religious program and consequently subject to chaplain supervision. In most cases, lay-led services constitute a temporary accommodation of specific religious needs.
Offerings	<p>Offerings should not be taken at lay-conducted services, except as authorized by the commanding officer. Any monies collected will be part of the command religious offerings fund and shall be used for religious benevolence purposes only.</p> <p>Command appointment of lay leaders permits command supervision to ensure accountability for funds collected, disbursement under the intent of SECNAVINST 1730.7A, and protection of the rights of donors.</p>
Qualifications/ Training	<p>Commands shall appoint lay leaders on the basis of volunteerism, high moral character, motivation, and religious interest. Commanding officers shall ensure that lay leaders are trained to serve effectively.</p> <p>Religious Program Specialists shall not be assigned as lay leaders.</p>
Administering Sacraments/ Religious Rites	<p>Military chaplains and other clergy acquired under SECNAVINST 1730.3G shall be the only persons to administer sacraments aboard Navy ships or in Navy/Marine Corps activities.</p> <p>In cases of necessity, commanding officers may permit lay leaders or other servicemembers, empowered by a specific religious body and coordinated by the command chaplain or lay leader under the command religious program, to provide certain religious rites, administer sacraments or services to the members of that religious body. A statement of certification or approval from that religious body must be provided by the lay leader or servicemember.</p> <p>Although religious authority to administer may be granted to a lay leader or other servicemember by a particular faith group, permission to administer sacraments in a naval vessel or Navy/Marine Corps activity rests solely with the commanding officer.</p>