

## ***Chapter 5 – Customs of the Service***

1. *Customs and Traditions of the Canadian Armed Forces* (E.C. Russel, Deneau and Greenberg Ltd., 1980, A-JS-007-002/JD-001) presents many traditions that Engineers share with other branches of the Canadian Forces. It augments the information in this chapter and gives an in-depth history of the origins of saluting, messes, colours and other customs and ceremonies that are unique to the Canadian Forces. *The Honours, Flags and Heritage Structure of the Canadian Forces* A-AD-200/AG-000 provides a detailed reference to aspects of honours, flags and heritage.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF RANK LEVELS**

2. The effective functioning of the Canadian Forces in peace and war depends on the proper execution of command and the fulfilment of duties at every rank level. The distribution of responsibilities and an effective relationship among the rank levels is fundamental to a unit's effectiveness.

3. Commanding Officers. The first duty of Commanding Officers is to master their command and develop themselves and their subordinates while, at the same time, ensuring the care and well-being of their subordinates. Commanding Officers occupy the highest command level where it is still possible for a commander to know by name all of the officers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and, even the unit's most junior members. In units where the most junior ranks are known by a Commanding Officer who leads and inspires them by personal example, this shapes their fighting spirit, instils cohesion and engenders superior will.

4. Officers. The first duty of an officer is to lead. The second is to pursue self-improvement and professional development. To be good leaders, officers must be models of professional excellence, displaying uncompromising integrity of character, taking responsibility for their actions and being accountable for the actions of those in their charge. All officers must live by the precepts of the military ethos and in a spirit of fraternity that is anchored on service to the nation and care of subordinates.

5. Warrant Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers. Warrant Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers are frequently called 'the backbone of the Forces.' Their role is to translate the intentions of commanders into action and they are the link connecting the sailors, airmen and soldiers to their officers. Because of their experience, maturity and knowledge, Senior NCOs and Warrant Officers serve a special function. They must not only set the example in matters of discipline, drill, dress and deportment, but they also have an important responsibility in assisting in the development of inexperienced officers – a function that includes offering advice, helping solve problems, and providing feedback and information.

6. In their responsibilities both up and down the chain of command, Warrant Officers and NCOs must strive to develop a rapport that is based on honesty, trust, respect and open-mindedness. In this regard, Warrant Officers and NCOs are expected to know, observe and enforce all regulations, rules and instructions pertaining to their duties and to show a proper sense of their rank, status and responsibilities.

7. Sailors, Airmen and Soldiers. The junior ranks are expected to work, learn, and train hard, and to carry out all orders and tasks to the best of their abilities. Application of disciplined initiative for which the Canadian serviceperson is renowned is also demanded. Their actions, conduct, and deportment must reflect credit on themselves, their comrades and the Canadian Forces. In return, they have the right to be well and properly led, to be adequately trained and equipped, to be accorded trust and respect, to be appreciated for their efforts, and to know that their welfare will be tended to by their superiors.

## FORMS OF ADDRESS

8. In all military organizations, there is a strict code on how members should address both superiors and subordinates. This formal code has been developed over many centuries and was once commonly utilized but, since society has become much more relaxed, it is rarely used today to the full extent once practised. The military has found that, especially in combat situations where people are living closely together and orders must be followed without hesitation, it is imperative that the hierarchical culture be maintained. For this reason, the CME and all military branches continue to use this form of courtesy that stems from an awareness of people and a respect for others rights and feelings. It is not one-sided and should be observed by all, and extended to all. The guidelines for addressing both superiors and subordinates are explained in the following paragraphs.

9. All ranks shall address a more superior officer as *“Sir”* or *“Ma’am”* or by the appropriate rank; however, *“Sir”* and *“Ma’am”* should not be used so frequently as to make conversation awkward. Even during sporting events or relaxed social functions, proper forms of address are used unless permission is granted to use a superior’s first name. It should be remembered that these privileges are usually only granted for the duration of the event and that once a normal work routine is resumed the proper forms of address will again be used. Superior officers normally address junior officers by their first names.

10. Officers address all NCMs by their rank or, in the case of a Chief Warrant Officer, *“Mister”* as a preface to the surname. NCMs address other NCMs by rank, with the exception of Chief Warrant Officers. Chief Warrant Officers are not called *“Chief”* or *“Warrant”* but *“Sir”* by all subordinate NCMs. Only Chief Petty Officers may be addressed as *“Chief,”* with or without using the surname. Sergeant Major is an appointment and Master Warrant Officers and Chief Warrant Officers should be addressed as *“Sergeant Major”* only if they hold that appointment.

11. Following retirement, particularly in social and sporting events within the CME associations, CME Family members are encouraged to address one another on a first name or more relaxed basis. The use of former ranks is reserved for formal occasions such as parades in direct association with serving members, where retired members continue to respect the protocols of serving members, for obvious reasons.

12. Civilian spouses do not hold the rank of their military spouse. It is, however, polite to address the spouse of a superior as *“Sir”* or *“Ma’am”* until permission is granted to use given names.

## SALUTING

13. The military salute is a traditional demonstration of trust and respect and it is the position and rank, not the individual, being acknowledged. Paying compliments is a fundamental requirement that is indispensable to service discipline. Salutes must be given and returned smartly and readily. Look directly at the person and remember that salutes are returned and not merely acknowledged. Even when a salute is not required, it is polite to recognize other members with an appropriate greeting such as *“Good day.”*

14. All officers of higher rank are saluted and normally some form of greeting is spoken, such as *“Good Morning Sir.”* When accompanying a more superior officer or NCM, if the superior rank walks on the junior’s right, this permits paying or returning compliments without bumping into the junior. Only the superior member salutes or returns a salute while others give an eyes right or left, as appropriate. For example, when a Warrant Officer and a Major are walking together and meet a Captain, the Captain salutes the Major, who returns the salute. The Warrant Officer checks his arms and turn eyes right or left while the Major returns the salute. In this instance, there is no requirement for the Warrant Officer to salute the Captain. If the Major and Warrant Officer meet a Lieutenant-Colonel then, again, only the Major salutes and an eyes right or left by the Warrant Officer is appropriate

15. Compliments are always paid to passengers of staff cars flying distinguishing flags or bearing general officer vehicle plates. The superior passenger in a staff car should return the salute. Personnel operating a vehicle or riding a bicycle are not required to salute; however, it is appropriate for a pedestrian in uniform to salute a more superior officer on a bicycle.

16. It is not generally required to salute in hallways, although some local regulations may require personnel to salute indoors. When entering the office of a higher-ranking officer, salute if wearing headdress or, if not, stand at attention until acknowledged. The occupant returns the salute by standing. When an officer of superior rank enters an office, the occupant pays compliments by standing. If the officer enters frequently, the occupant may be advised to rise only on the first occasion each morning or in the presence of other subordinates.

17. Appropriate compliments are paid even when wearing civilian clothing. When in civilian dress, it is appropriate to come to attention and remove headdress whenever a salute would be correct if in uniform. When walking, the hat is raised and the head turned right or left. If a hat is not worn, it is correct to turn the head and offer a polite greeting.

18. When the national flag is being raised or lowered, all ranks within view, whether in uniform or in civilian dress, shall pay compliments. Individuals face the flagstaff, stand at attention, and salute if in uniform. Formations halt facing the flag staff, remain at attention, and the member in command salutes. Groups bearing weapons present arms. While visiting in a foreign country, Canadian Forces personnel in uniform should pay respect to that country's national flag in the same manner as for the Canadian flag.

## **ORDERS**

19. Orders are a military custom by necessity. A force must work together as a team with all elements combining to perform a complex operation. If one component fails, the entire mission may fail. Good leaders learn that orders must be reasonable and that subordinates appreciate having a wider perspective on the task when possible. Leaders should ensure that subordinates understand why a particular task must be accomplished. In this way, a keen and intelligent effort by everyone is assured. Subordinates are to be led, not driven.

20. Except in the most straightforward of circumstances, or in an emergency, an opportunity is generally provided to ask questions after an order has been issued. At this time, it is acceptable to politely question an order and to offer advice to the superior. However, once an order is received it is a duty, despite personal feelings, to ensure it is carried out to the best ability of all ranks concerned. Never apologize for, or imply disagreement with an order. To apologize for one's own order is weak, to apologize for that of a superior is disloyal.

21. Unlawful orders shall not be obeyed. Many times throughout history, soldiers have attempted to use the defence "*I was just following orders.*" This is not a justification and, if an unlawful act is committed, both the subordinate and the superior are liable. The fact that the order is unlawful should be brought to the immediate attention of the superior. If the situation cannot be resolved it should be brought to the attention of the chain of command. Training in this aspect is given to all ranks and QR&O 103.16, 19.015, and 19.02 provide clarification of duty with respect to unlawful or conflicting orders.

## **KNOW YOUR SUBORDINATES**

22. Learn your subordinates' names and particulars, interests, problems, aims and ambitions. Encourage them to seek your advice by showing interest in their well-being. Nevertheless, always maintain the proper superior-to-subordinate relationship. Respect their confidence and their individuality. Know their strengths and encourage them to improve upon their weaknesses. It is a superior's responsibility to develop subordinates to the best of their abilities. Challenge them and they will rise to the occasion.

## **OUTSIDE INTERESTS**

23. Members of the CME should be encouraged to have hobbies and interests outside the workplace. This helps the member to relax during off duty hours and promotes a healthy lifestyle. The CME also encourages members to participate in family activities in order to nurture a supportive home environment.

24. Current Events. An intelligent and educated person keeps abreast of international and political news by following current events, especially those international events that may influence deployments and politics pertaining to National Defence. [See <http://canada.kos.net/> as one example of a site with a broad interest and a Canadian perspective. The site <http://www.cfc.dnd.ca/spotlight.en.html> provides a daily listing of newspaper articles from across Canada that mention the military and the site also links to the "Day in History."] Members should also be certain to read Canadian Forces and CME publications (see [Chapter 2 – CME Communications](#)), to ensure that they are informed of policy changes. It is the responsibility of all leaders, to be informed of events that may affect either the mission, or their subordinates.

25. Physical Fitness. Physical fitness is an essential element of combat readiness, engenders good military bearing, and contributes to physical and mental well-being. It also reduces fatigue during long, stressful tasks. A state of fitness is a duty and a matter of personal responsibility.

26. Community Service. Service to the community is also encouraged in CME members. There are many civilian organizations that could benefit from the help of engineers, including youth groups, sports and hobby associations, local government and community councils. Current Conflict of Interest guidelines should be consulted if there is any suggestion that a conflict may exist. By serving with such organizations, CME members gain valuable leadership experience. Volunteer effort also fosters a stronger bond between the local community and the military that encourages a greater appreciation of the role that the Canadian Forces plays in protecting Canada.

## **POSTINGS**

27. Upon receiving a posting message, it is customary to write a letter of introduction to the new Commanding Officer or unit Chief Warrant Officer. The letter should include information on the member's special qualifications and goals that the member intends to achieve during the posting. The expected date of arrival and travel plans should be explained briefly and it is appropriate to mention how family members are reacting to the posting. A response should be written promptly, welcoming the new member, briefly describing the member's new duties, and introducing the sponsor who has been chosen to ease the transition. These letters are normally no longer than one page in length.

28. Upon arrival at a new place of duty, even if on leave before the change of strength date, an officer should arrange an interview with the Commanding Officer and an NCM, with the unit Chief Warrant Officer. The newcomer should become familiar with unit and base standing orders, standing operating procedures, and other regulations necessary for the performance of duties, as soon as possible. Members are also expected to acquaint themselves with the history and traditions of the unit shortly after arrival.

## **PARADES**

29. Parade spectators should be seated before the troops march on. If arriving late, it is polite to remain standing near the stands, or to take a seat without disturbing the other spectators. Spectators on parade remain seated for most of the parade and are only required to rise at the following times:

- a. when a National Anthem is played (salute if in uniform);
- b. when the national flag is paraded in front of them (salute if in uniform); and,
- c. when the reviewing officer arrives and departs.

## **VISITS**

30. Several points of courtesy and protocol apply when individuals or groups are visiting a unit or base. An aide-de-camp is appointed to help with the administrative and social details and to facilitate the visit of a distinguished guest, dignitary, general officer, or designated appointment. Such aides should be carefully selected for their ability to execute this function since this officer represents the unit. Proper planning and follow-up of details is essential to avoid embarrassment to the unit and the visitor. Included, as [Annex A](#) to this chapter, is a set of guidelines for aides-de camp on some of the details that should be considered when hosting a visitor. This list is also a helpful guide for planning and facilitating those visits where an ADC is not warranted.



## ***Annex A – Guidelines for Hosting Visitors***

1. The primary duty of a visitor's aide is to allow the guest an enjoyable visit, free of embarrassment. If an aide-de-camp is not required for a visitor, an officer of primary interest (OPI) from the hosting unit is normally appointed to make all the arrangements for the visit. OPIs should act in the same manner as aides-de-camp; however, the aiguillette is not worn. OPIs should stay in the background but remain alert to the needs of the visitor. It is the OPI's responsibility to make sure that the visitor is delivered to each event safely, on time, and dressed appropriately. The following guidelines apply to all visits.

2. Aiguillette. The aide-de-camp wears an aiguillette to signify the appointment and must perform the duties competently and with tact. The aiguillette identifies the aide-de-camp and ensures effective action and co-operation in any given task. On ceremonial occasions, the large aiguillette is worn while the single loop is worn for other duties. The aiguillette is worn on the right shoulder by a royal equerry, for example, aide-de-camp to the governor general or to a lieutenant governor, and on the left shoulder for all other appointments.

3. Know the Visitor. Obtain a recent biography and photograph of the guest and ensure that key personnel receive copies. Determine the visitor's likes and dislikes, including food, drink, hobbies or interests, dietary or allergic restrictions, and attitude toward smoking, by questioning the visitor's executive assistant or staff officer. This background information should include the visitor's spouse, if attending.

4. Itinerary. It is generally the visit OPI's responsibility to develop the itinerary. Question the visitor's executive assistant to find out what the visitor is interested in seeing. Contact the Base or Wing Commander and all CME units in the area to find out if they would like to brief the visitor. Check with the visitor's executive assistant to see if an after-hours program is required and whether the visitor will be accompanied by a spouse who requires a host. Ensure that early notice is given to local personnel on professional and social activities to ensure maximum participation. Remember that it is the OPI's responsibility to confirm all administrative arrangements, including facilities for meetings, availability of audio visual aids, transportation, and lodging. If a number of locations are to be visited, scheduling is very important and a time appreciation is required.

5. Before the itinerary is finalized, check with the visitor's office to make sure it is satisfactory. The visitor should be given a copy, in advance, to prepare for the briefings. The following should be included on the itinerary:

- a. a schedule of events, including times, locations and names of the OPIs for each portion of the itinerary;
- b. a list of the prominent people the visitor will meet, with a brief biography if appropriate;
- c. the dress for each event;
- d. the mode of transportation and the name of the person meeting the visitor at the airport;
- e. names and telephone numbers of hotels or other lodgings;
- f. a list of planned after-hours activities;
- g. an indication of any gifts that may be presented to the visitor, so that arrangements may be made to reciprocate, if appropriate; and,
- h. a spouse's schedule, if required.

6. A welcome package greatly facilitates briefing the visitor. An itinerary, room keys, meal card, and base/wing information booklet with map are normally included. The visitor's quarters should be checked in advance and kitchen and bar stock replenished if necessary. A telephone, with local and base/wing directories, should also be provided. If the visitor is staying at commercial lodgings, confirm the reservation on the day of arrival. If no one is familiar with the hotel, be sure to check the room's suitability prior to making the reservation.

7. Transport. If a staff car is required, pennants and vehicle plates should be obtained before the visitor's arrival. Although transportation sections normally hold "*star*" plates, and pennants for general officers, the visitor's executive assistant holds the particular appointment pennant. Prior to meeting the visitor, ensure that the driver is aware of the responsibility of assisting with luggage, and placing the pennant on the car. When the guest arrives, salute, open and close the passenger side rear door for the visitor, and sit in the passenger seat. The driver will then attach the pennant and drive away.

8. Schedule. The OPI should note names and telephone numbers of the unit hosts at each briefing location and the best routes to the briefings. Itineraries should be flexible enough that a small delay will not upset the entire day. It is wise to have a cellular telephone to call ahead with an estimated time of arrival, especially if the schedule has been disrupted. If the visitor is holding up the schedule, a polite and discreet reminder that it is time for the next event is appropriate. One reminder is adequate. Let the visitor decide if it is suitable to be late for the next briefing.

9. Dress. Be sure that the visitor is aware of proper dress at all times and, if necessary, discreetly advise. Always take care to wear the same dress as the guest.

10. Social Functions. Prepare a copy of the guest list, including first names, and brief the visitor on the seating plan, dealing particularly with those seated in the visitor's immediate vicinity. Be prepared to brief the visitor on the sequence of events for the function, particularly those in which the visitor will take part. Apart from official guests, all visitors are expected to pay for meals and functions such as mess dinners, and meet-and-greets. Co-ordinate the payment of any mess dinner fees with the visitor's executive assistant prior to the visit. Also, ensure the menu does not include foods the visitor dislikes or cannot consume.

11. Parades. Ensure that the visitor is briefed on parade requirements. Attend the parade rehearsal and make certain the staff car's arrival at the Parade Square is rehearsed with the driver. Before the parade, synchronize watches with the parade Chief Warrant Officer or commander and confirm the visitor's arrival time. When arriving on parade, the staff car should stop in a position that allows the visitor to exit facing the reviewing stand. The driver normally remains with the car to allow departure immediately following the parade. The OPI or aide-de-camp takes up a position two metres to the rear of the right-hand corner of the reviewing stand and, on departure, leads the way to the staff car.