



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
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OPNAVINST 6420.1B  
N97  
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OPNAV INSTRUCTION 6420.1B

From: Chief of Naval Operations

Subj: PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR NON-SUBMARINE PERSONNEL EMBARKED  
ON SUBMARINES

Ref: (a) NAVMED P-117, Article 15-106

Encl: (1) Physical Qualification for All Non-Submarine Personnel Embarking on Submarines,  
Military and Civilians

1. Purpose. To provide physical requirements for non-submarine personnel embarked on submarines, including non-submarine military personnel, all civilians, governmental or contractor employees, and military dependents. It is the intent of these physical requirements to preclude the embarkation of personnel on submarines that are at an increased risk of becoming medical liabilities. This instruction has been revised to optimize the process for direct support element personnel embarking on submarines. This instruction is a complete revision and should be reviewed in its entirety.
2. Cancellation. OPNAVINST 6420.1A.
3. Scope and Applicability. The provisions of this instruction are applicable throughout the U.S. Navy, specifically units who operate U.S. submarines or manage personnel who embark on U.S. submarines.
4. Policy. The basic physical standards for submarine personnel are specified in reference (a). Since these standards have been formulated for career submarine operational personnel, exceptions are warranted in the cases of individuals being embarked for limited periods of time, and for the performance of specific duties. In general, consideration must be given to the period of embarkation, the importance of the mission, and the specific attributes or skills a particular individual may contribute to that mission. Less stringent requirements can be tolerated for short duration cruises where return to port or rapid evacuation is feasible. Questionable or unstable medical conditions should be interpreted as unacceptable risks and the individual should not embark. Embarkation is defined as the boarding of a submarine for purpose of a voyage away from shore.
5. Action. Requirements must be met for underway periods of the duration indicated.

a. Underway Periods in Local Waters for a Week or Less Where There is Little Risk to Impacting an Operational Mission. Examples include demonstration or familiarization cruises. Underways conducted for sea trials or other significant equipment testing are short duration, but require special consideration given the high cost and degree of coordination engendered in these events.

(1) Personnel are required to complete an OPNAV 6420/1 Submarine Embarkation Medical Information form prior to embarking. Based on the OPNAV 6420/1 responses from the individual embarked, the medical screener may require more medical documentation or a review of the embarked's health record. Medical screeners must utilize enclosure (1) which outlines basic conditions that preclude embarkation. The medical screener must be a primary care provider, an occupational health provider, a submarine independent duty corpsman, or an undersea medical officer (UMO).

(a) Embarked with non-Department of Defense medical records are responsible for obtaining any medical documentation or health record items required by the medical screener or UMO. The embarked is responsible for signing any required medical information release.

(b) Medical screening for contractor employees must be per their respective contract. Contracting officer must ensure the medical screening requirement is incorporated into all new contracts.

(2) A UMO must make the final recommendation concerning the individual's (including contractors) fitness for embarkation.

(3) If the UMO determines that an embarked requires further evaluation to certify suitability, a consultation may be requested. Civilian personnel or their employers will be responsible for obtaining the required medical consultation and forwarding it to the UMO in a timely manner.

b. Underway Periods of Longer Duration or Where Risk Exists to Operational Missions. Submarine duty fitness standards for submariners are primarily based on their essential job functions, which include deployments to remote, austere environments without immediate access to higher level medical care. In lieu of this, non-submarine personnel embarking on submarines for long, forward deployed locations largely require the same standard of fitness as a submariner. As such, long duration embarked must have:

(1) A physical examination per reference (a); however, a chest radiograph, tuberculin skin testing, an audiogram, a visual acuity test, and a color vision test will not be required. A dental exam and latent tuberculosis infection screening within the past year is required. The periodicity of this examination will reflect the periodicity requirements of reference (a).

(2) In addition to a submarine duty examination, completion of OPNAV 6420/1 is required within 1 month of scheduled embarkation and should be completed per subparagraph 5a(1). A UMO must make the final recommendation concerning the individual's fitness for embarkation.

(3) All active duty embarked must be at full individual medical readiness.

(4) Commands which routinely send personnel to augment submarine missions must coordinate with the local supporting UMO to ensure that all potential augmentees meet review examination requirements on a scheduled basis. The local medical officer will provide point of contact information upon request.

(5) Navy special warfare units which routinely deploy on submarines must have their attached UMO complete OPNAV 6420/1 for all embarking personnel and forward to the receiving submarine independent duty corpsman.

6. Responsibility. The responsibility for ensuring that each individual to be embarked on submarines for extended periods has received an appropriate physical examination rests with the command issuing the travel orders.

a. Military non-submarine and civilian employees of the government should be examined by the command to which the individual is attached, prior to commencement of travel to embarkation location.

b. Other civilian or non-governmental personnel should be examined by their primary care manager or civilian physician prior to reporting for embarkation.

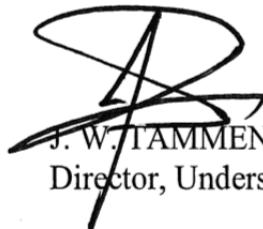
7. Exceptions. The commanding officer (CO) has ultimate authority on the decision for an individual to embark. When the UMO does not endorse the embarkation of an individual, who is deemed mission critical by the submarine CO, the cognizant UMO is required to personally brief the CO on inherent risks, including the rationale for their recommendation. In cases where the UMO assesses that the risk to the health of the individual is significant, in addition to the CO, the UMO will brief the type commander UMO. It is not anticipated that this situation will be a common occurrence, nor is it intended to put the CO in a position of making clinical decisions. The UMO is required to make recommendations that balance sound medical judgment with operational requirements. The most conservative solution does not necessarily serve the Navy's needs.

8. Records Management. Records created as a result of this instruction, regardless of media and format, must be managed per Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Manual 5210.1 of January 2012.

9. Review and Effective Date. Per OPNAVINST 5215.17A, Undersea Warfare Division OPNAV (N97) will review this instruction annually on the anniversary of its issuance date to ensure applicability, currency, and consistency with Federal, Department of Defense, SECNAV,

and Navy policy and statutory authority using OPNAV 5215/40 Review of Instruction. This instruction will be in effect for 5 years, unless revised or cancelled in the interim, and will be reissued by the 5-year anniversary date if it is still required, unless it meets one of the exceptions in OPNAVINST 5215.17A, paragraph 9. Otherwise, if the instruction is no longer required, it will be processed for cancellation as soon as the cancellation is known following the guidance in OPNAV Manual 5215.1.

10. Forms. OPNAV 6420/1 Submarine Embarkation Medical Information is available for download from Naval Forms Online at <https://forms.documentservices.dla.mil/order/>



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Releasability and distribution:

This instruction is cleared for public release and is available electronically only via Department of the Navy Issuances Web site, <https://www.secnav.navy.mil/doni/default.aspx>

**PHYSICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR ALL NON-SUBMARINE PERSONNEL EMBARKING  
ON SUBMARINES, MILITARY AND CIVILIAN**

1. Individuals planning embarkation on submarines must be informed that only limited medical facilities are available on these ships. Even minor chronic conditions that require continuous treatment cannot be allowed. All non-submarine personnel embarking on submarines must be informed of the examinations required and the physical qualifications that must be met. Definitive medical care can be hours to days away.

a. Psychiatric. The psychological fitness of embarking personnel must be carefully evaluated. For cruises of long duration or forward deployment, a psychological assessment must be conducted by a psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, or a UMO for anyone with a prior mental health diagnosis. Disqualifying conditions include, but are not limited to:

(1) any evidence of tendencies which might prevent satisfactory adjustment to submarine life, to include claustrophobia, difficulties in interpersonal relations, lack of adaptability, and personality disorders;

(2) any history of depression, psychosis, paranoia, neurosis, or other psychiatric disorders; or

(3) any history of chemical or alcohol dependency not in remission for 2 years.

b. Vision. Individuals embarked with unaided visual acuity of 20/70 or more in either eye must have at least two pairs of eyeglasses or soft contact lenses with the proper correction. A history of refractive corneal surgery must be disqualifying unless 3 months have elapsed since the surgical procedure and there are no persistent visual defects or problems. Any history of glaucoma or deteriorating visual conditions such as macular degeneration is disqualifying.

c. Nose and Throat. Obstructed breathing due to nasal septal deviation, nasal polyps, chronic sinusitis, or hypertrophic tonsils must disqualify from embarkation.

d. Ears. Acute or chronic disease of the inner, middle or external ear; a history of chronic inability to equalize pressure manifested by repeated aural barotraumas; or persistent pain secondary to minute pressure variations such as in an aircraft or tunnel, must be disqualifying. Auditory acuity must be sufficient to permit the understanding of ordinary conversational speech. The use of a hearing aid is permissible.

e. Teeth. Individuals must have adequate masticatory function for ingestion of the ordinary diet, and be in one of the dental classes listed in subparagraph 1e(1) or 1e(2):

(1) Class I. Individuals who don't require dental treatment,

(2) Class II. Individuals requiring routine but not early treatment of conditions, such as:

- (a) moderate calculus;
  - (b) prosthetic cases;
  - (c) caries - not excessive or advanced; or
  - (d) periodontal diseases - not extensive or advanced.
- f. Respiratory System. Disqualifying conditions include, but are not limited to:
- (1) any evidence of potentially active chronic inflammatory disease including tuberculosis, sarcoidosis, histoplasmosis, coccidioidomycosis, bronchiectasis, or abscess;
  - (2) confirmed history of bronchial asthma after age 12;
  - (3) symptomatic chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; or
  - (4) a history of pneumothorax within 2 years of the date of the examination, or any history of spontaneous pneumothorax.
- g. Cardiovascular System. Disqualifying conditions include, but are not limited to:
- (1) supraventricular or ventricular arrhythmia, except of the sinus type, or other significant disturbance of heart or vascular system;
  - (2) a history of angina or previous myocardial infarction;
  - (3) uncontrolled or inadequately controlled hypertension, to include those individuals with associated heart or kidney disease; or
  - (4) implanted pace makers or defibrillators, generally.
- h. Gastrointestinal and Urinary Systems. Disqualifying conditions include, but are not limited to:
- (1) individuals with a history of disease such as severe colitis, irritable bowel syndrome, peptic ulcer disease, recurrent or chronic pancreatitis, or chronic diarrhea unless they have been asymptomatic and on an unrestricted diet during the past 2 years;
  - (2) a history of gastrointestinal tract perforation or hemorrhage until the cause has been discovered, corrected, and they have been asymptomatic for a period of 2 years;
  - (3) a history of splenectomy unless secondary to traumatic injury with appropriate immunizations; or

(4) a history of nephrolithiasis or urolithiasis.

i. Skin. Any acute or chronic skin disease other than mild localized acne is disqualifying. In particular, a history of recurrent skin infections (e.g., methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus) is disqualifying.

j. Skeletal and Extremities. Disqualifying conditions include, but are not limited to:

- (1) any disease of bone, joint, or muscle which limits mobility required on board;
- (2) chronic symptomatic low back pain; and
- (3) presence of prostheses, casts, or splints.

k. Endocrine Disorders. Any poorly controlled endocrine disorder requiring constant treatment is disqualifying. All forms of diabetes mellitus requiring insulin are disqualifying. Type 2 diabetes mellitus, under optimal control with oral agents alone, may be considered for embarkation.

l. Rheumatologic Conditions. Any significant rheumatologic condition that has not been in remission for 2 years is disqualifying. Use of immunosuppressants or immunomodulators is disqualifying.

m. Neurologic Conditions. Any history of cerebrovascular incident, including stroke or transient ischemic attack, is disqualifying. Any history of significant neurologic deficits, movement disorders, or neuromuscular diseases is disqualifying. If submarine riders have a history of seizure disorder, they should be seizure free for a 5-year time period prior to consideration.

n. Infectious Diseases. Any active infectious disease process is disqualifying.

o. Medication. Individuals who are taking any prescribed medications must have this information documented for review by a UMO prior to embarkation. Riders who require prescribed narcotic medications are disqualified.

p. Miscellaneous. Pregnancy is disqualifying. Any recent surgery is disqualifying unless specifically addressed and cleared by the performing surgeon. All diseases and conditions, including any immune-compromised conditions, which require frequent medical attention or tend to physically incapacitate the individual, must preclude embarkation. In questionable cases, the examining medical office is advised to consult with the medical department representative of the submarine concerned or any undersea medical officer for guidance.