

SUBJ: DACOWITS RFI #3

FROM: CG-7

TO: CG-127

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)/GEAR FOR WOMEN

DACOWITS continues to review and examine Personal Protective Gear (PPE) available to service women. The Committee believes all the Services have made great strides in improving PPE to fit women. The Committee is interested in learning about the procurement, issuance and timelines for obtaining PPE for women.

The Committee requests a **briefing** from the Military Services.

DACOWITS:

The Committee requests a **briefing** from the **Military Services*** to address the following questions:

- a. What are the processes/practices to evaluate the effectiveness of PPE for women in integrated career specialties (e.g., MOS')?
- b. What is the timeline and process to obtain equipment in supply channels or to request alternative equipment?
- c. How is equipment procured for unique fits if it is not in normal supply systems?
- d. Is the same equipment used in training as for real world missions?
- e. Is all combat equipment issued for training? If not, why?
- f. What methods are used to leverage new and changing technology to improve PPE for women?

CG Response:

- a. **What are the processes/practices to evaluate the effectiveness of PPE for women in integrated career specialties (e.g., MOS')?**

Coast Guard PPE is mission based and not necessarily specific to a Coast Guard rating (e.g., MOS). Domestic operations on the water for example, requires boat crews to wear specific PPE authorized by the Coast Guard's Rescue and Survival Systems Manual (COMDTINST M10470.10G). Coast Guard body armor is required to meet the Ballistic Resistance-National Institute of Justice Standard 0101.06. When conducting domestic operations, specifications and wear requirements are outlined in the Coast Guard Maritime Law Enforcement Manual (COMDTINST M16247.1G). Operations in support of Combatant Commanders follow theater specific PPE requirements.

Coast Guard offices that manage PPE provide a web based PPE Problem Report to provide all PPE users the opportunity to evaluate and alert program offices of equipment effectiveness/deficiencies. PPE users are able to provide immediate input to quickly identify challenges and support the alteration and replacement of PPE that fails to support gender differences and program standards.

b. What is the timeline and process to obtain equipment in supply channels or to request alternative equipment?

Standard Coast Guard PPE is obtained through procurement contracts with commercial vendors. Individual units are funded to conduct direct PPE purchases under established supply contracts. Depending on the type and quantity of PPE ordered, the timeline to obtain PPE for individual members can be days to several weeks. However, units typically maintain a PPE inventory locally to allow immediate issue of equipment to newly reporting members.

c. How is equipment procured for unique fits if it is not in normal supply systems?

Standard Concealable Soft Armor, NIJ Standard 0101.06, Level IIIA, is included into the DHS Strategic Sourcing contract for body armor. As part of this contract, custom fitted armor is provided for all women to ensure the same form, fit and function is maintained. The DHS Strategic Source contract for body armor is gender neutral and specifically requires that the vendor provide “concealable cut armor [that is] either custom tailored for each individual or appropriately fit using standardized sizing”.

d. Is the same equipment used in training as for real world missions?

Generally, the PPE issued for operational use is also used to conduct training. An exception to this is the Coast Guard’s water survival training program for members issued NIJ Level IV Ballistic Protection System (BPS). Independent flotation worn on the operator’s weapons belt is used to allow the use of the quick release mechanism on the BPS. The release mechanism allows the operator to ditch the heavier ballistic plates if ejected from a cutter or boat into the water. Semi-annual training is conducted in the pool with a BPS and flotation devices. Units maintain training ballistic carriers and ballistic plates for the water survival training. Only Coast Guard members required by an overseas Combatant Commander and select Deployable Specialized Forces units wear a NIJ Level IV BPS.

e. Is all combat equipment issued for training? If not, why?

Few Coast Guard units are issued combat equipment. Most PPE issued to Coast Guard members is designed for domestic operations. However, all Coast Guard members deploying to a theater that requires combat equipment are issued the equipment for pre-deployment training.

f. What methods are used to leverage new and changing technology to improve PPE for women?

The Coast Guard uses 5-7 year contracts as part of the DHS Strategic Sourcing Program, to increase acquisition efficiency and enhance mission performance. During the contracting process, agencies across DHS converge at the Customs and Border Protection's advanced training facility to review new technologies and develop any agency specific requirements to be included into the contract. Programs utilize user feedback such as the PPE Problem Reports that are submitted directly by field PPE users to support PPE improvements or the use of new technologies to improve PPE fit, form, and function for women.