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## APPLY Yourself

If you're between the paygrades of CWO2 and O-9 and still active in the Navy Reserve, learn all you can about APPLY. If you're between CWO2 and O-4, APPLY is the way to get command. If you're O-5 or O-6, APPLY is how you get a pay billet. If you're O-6 through O-9, it's knowledge for mentoring your Sailors.

Although it may be hard to believe, we didn't always assign officers to command and pay billets through a formal national board. We used to use a system that was often described as the "good ol' boy network." If you knew someone who knew someone, you were in. That worked pretty well when we had authorized end strength approaching 150,000. Now that we're on a glide slope to 73,100 for FY-06, things are a lot tighter.

The first board resembling today's APPLY was in 1995. Applicants sent in paper copies of the last five FITREPs plus an application letter. As the process became more advanced, applicants mailed information on 3-1/2" floppy disks. Today, the process is quite sophisticated, pulling FITREP and career information from EMPRES, billet information from RHS (Reserve Headquarters System), and cross-referencing a whole alphabet soup of databases to ensure accuracy.

Navy Reserve leadership requests that all officers register for APPLY, even if you're comfortable in your job. There are some important benefits for doing so. It provides each Sailor an opportunity to validate RHS billet information and identify errors in our manpower database. It provides a "record scrub" whereby officers are notified of missing FITREPs

or other irregularities. It provides current exposure to senior officers who may be mentoring JOs in the APPLY system. Lastly, it is the one approved way to earn a command assignment at any paygrade or a pay billet at the O5-O6 level.

You must register by 30 April. Access APPLY from <<https://reserves.navy.mil>> by clicking on the link for APPLY FY-06 at the bottom of the page. Complete all screens of career and educational information, and fill out a "dream sheet" of 35 billets by 20 May. The board meets 13-24 June, with results due by 11 July. Selectees confirm their billets by 31 July. Billets not accepted will be filled from an alternate candidate list.

Reread my April 2004 Professional Development article entitled, "Stupid APPLY Tricks" to reduce the probability you'll become an object lesson for others. I suggest reading COMNAVRESFORCOM NOTICE 5400 of 12 JAN 05 in its entirety to understand precisely what happens at the board. Most importantly, get on CAPT Larry Weill's APPLY mailing list by sending an e-mail request to <[CaptWeill@aol.com](mailto:CaptWeill@aol.com)>. Larry sends out frequent e-mail updates and has prepared an APPLY "first aid" CD. It includes an APPLY registration guide, the complete text of the 5400 notice, a list of NOBCs, RFAS codes, and AQDs, a sample letter to the board, and answers to over 100 questions regarding APPLY. Download a copy today from <<http://www.navy-reserve.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=2129>>.

When filling out your dream sheet, put in as many choices (up to 35) as you are willing to perform. The board does routinely assign choices past #30, so be careful what you use as "ballast" in your list. If you live in Seattle, don't list Roosevelt Roads, PR, as your last choice; you just might get it! In general, list command billets before non-command assignments, but be realistic. If you've been in the VTU for years, don't waste

your #1 choice on a fleet command; it's not going to happen. Stay in your "lane" by selecting billets that are coded for your designator, or have RFAS (reserve functional and sequence) codes that allow you to substitute for the specified paygrade and NOBC. Say "yes" to other billets, and provide a reasonable commuting radius based on your motivation and access to cheap airfare. Don't forget to include comments – these are the only remarks that are viewed by the board during the billet slating process.

To prepare for the APPLY board, do the following things now. Apply for NOBCs that are required for the jobs you wish to hold. They're not automatic, but a well-written application is important. Order your service record on CD-ROM (see my February 2005 column entitled, "Cleaning Up Your Official Service Record") and verify all FITREPs and awards are legible. Review your OSR/PSR for completeness and ensure awards are listed correctly. Submit missing medals and awards to COMNAVRESFORCOM and include a copy with a letter to the APPLY board. This letter should be brief, to the point, and address missing or confusing record information. It is appropriate to include the most recent FITREP, a missing award, or explain a gap in service. Do not whine or include superfluous material. Ensure your letter is postmarked by 1 June.

This is your once-a-year swing at the plate. Prepare, research, and meet all deadlines. Master the system, and mentor others in the process. Ask a senior officer in your community to review and critique your billet choices while there is still time to change them. Manage your expectations – about 7 percent of commanders and 10 percent of captains get command; about one third get pay billets. Whatever the result, take pride in the fact that you have an opportunity to serve your Navy and your nation during this time of armed conflict. Good luck! 🍀