



CIVIL ENGINEER CORPS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What will I do in the Navy Civil Engineer Corps?

Naval Officers in the Civil Engineer Corps (CEC) provide professional facilities engineering services and management at all Navy & Marine Corps facilities worldwide. The name “Civil Engineer Corps” does not refer solely to the discipline of Civil Engineering, but to a multitude of engineering and architectural disciplines. You’ll find the Naval Officers of the Civil Engineer Corps working on: construction projects, infrastructure repairs and maintenance, facility support contracts, real estate management, nature resource management, environmental planning and management, and many other facilities engineering areas.

The vast majority of new CEC Officers will find themselves working in one of these three areas: construction management, public works, or with the Seabees.

2. What is a “construction management” job like?

About 60% of new CEC Officers work as construction managers. Although exact details differ from job to job, the basic task is to ensure that Navy construction projects are built safely, as designed, on time, and within budget. Tasks include ensuring that construction is in accordance with the project plans and specifications, resolving design problems, coordinating construction schedules with Navy operations, ensuring that payments correctly reflect progress, and managing the project budget. It’s difficult to create a comprehensive list of everything that a contract manager may encounter. Anything that affects safety, quality, and the timely completion of the project is a concern for the construction contract manager. That includes not only technical problems, but contractual and business problems as well.

3. What is a “public works” job like?

To a large extent, public works involves operating and maintaining all of the Navy’s facilities. We do many of the same things that facilities managers do in every city, at every hospital, and on every college campus: power distribution, heating, air conditioning, water and wastewater, grounds maintenance, telecommunications, transportation and equipment, environmental issues, and facilities maintenance. We have many of the same concerns and encounter many of the same problems as our civilian counterparts.

Public Works touches every member of the Navy/Marine Corps team. Aviators, submariners, ship-drivers, SEALs, Marines, scientists, and every other group all have public works concerns, and it is our job to meet them. Because of the inherently diverse nature of public works, CEC officers are in a variety of public works jobs. Some work with the public works forces in the planning and execution of various projects. Others may work with the operating forces to help coordinate and prioritize public works concerns. Diversity is the hallmark of any public works job.

4. What is a “SEABEE” job like?

Unlike public works and construction management, a job with the Seabees is something unique to the Navy. Only about 18% of CEC jobs are with the Seabees, but these jobs offer a chance to gain skills and experiences that cannot be found elsewhere.

The Seabees are a force of highly skilled enlisted personnel, trained in both construction and defensive combat, under the leadership of CEC officers. At any given time, Seabees are deployed around the world to

perform contingency construction, provide humanitarian relief, and to accomplish important construction tasks, exercises, and training. The Seabee's motto, "We Build, We Fight" sums it up.

Seabees can be found in Naval Mobile Construction Battalions, poised to provide support worldwide. They may also be part of an Amphibious Construction Battalion, with a specialized mission of supporting amphibious operations. There are also Underwater Construction Teams, and small Seabee units attached to various Navy installations. Each of these diverse units exemplifies the unique spirit of the Seabees, and presents unique leadership challenges for CEC officers.

A new CEC officer will be expected to lead Seabees through the successful completion of any number of missions. Developing leadership skills is imperative in everything a CEC officer does and the leadership lessons and experience gained in the Seabees are particularly powerful.

5. I'm not a civil engineer. What will I do in the Civil Engineer Corps?

The same things all other CEC Officers are doing. In the eyes of the Civil Engineer Corps, a good engineer is a good engineer, regardless of what discipline they have studied. In addition to civil engineers, the CEC needs mechanical engineers, electrical engineers, environmental engineers, architects, and other engineer majors (with an ABET accredited engineering degree), or accredited architecture degree (NAAB). The CEC expects all of its engineers and architects to perform in all areas, across disciplines, with equal proficiency.

6. What training will I get right after I graduate?

After 13 weeks of Officer Candidate School (OCS) in Pensacola, FL, new CEC Officers attend the Basic Course at the Civil Engineer Corps Officer School (CECOS) in Port Hueneme, CA. The Basic Course consists of 8 weeks of CEC orientation along with 4 weeks of basic government contracting principles for a total of 12 weeks.

The course is a non-technical introduction to the many roles performed by CEC officers, along with some specialized training relating to your first assignment. Unlike some Navy training (like learning to fly, or drive a ship), it is difficult to teach what we do in a classroom. There are no simulators for what we do, nor can we do much "practicing" before we actually begin. The best way to develop necessary skills and become proficient in what we do is on-the-job training, which is recognized as the most significant portion of any CEC officer's training.

7. Do I get to choose where I will go, or what I will do?

Prior to every assignment you will fill out an Officer Preference Card listing your choices for your next job. You can specify your top three choices for geographic location and job type. The detailer (person that writes your orders) will then use your requests and balance it against the needs of the Navy and your career development to determine your next duty assignment. You will talk with your detailer to discuss your next job and location.

Keep in mind that there are different types of career paths in the CEC, so everyone isn't competing for the same jobs. Some people are more concerned about what type of work they will be doing, others about where they will be doing it. The important thing is to make your preferences known. The smaller size of our community (about 1,250 officers) also works in our favor. It allows us to make the whole process a little more "personal."

8. When will I find out where I'll be working?

During OCS, your "detailer", the officer who will assign you to your first job, will meet with you. Based on your input and the needs of the Navy, you'll be given your first assignment before you graduate from OCS.

9. Will I go to CECOS right after OCS?

It depends on timing. While OCS classes are graduating every few weeks, there are only two CECOS classes each year (beginning in September and January). There is a good chance that there will be some time between OCS graduation and the start of the next CECOS class. If that happens, you will go to your first duty station to begin learning about the CEC and especially learning about what will be expected of you in your first job. Having a good understanding of what your responsibilities are before going to CECOS makes the training you receive in Port Hueneme a lot more meaningful. You will have a lot more questions!

10. What are the chances I'll go overseas?

Since most Navy bases are in the United States, the majority (about 70%) of the junior officer CEC jobs are located here. We do have bases overseas, and about 17% of the junior officer jobs in the CEC are located outside of the contiguous United States. The remaining jobs are in the Seabees, who deploy overseas on a regular basis.

11. Will the Navy send me to graduate school? If so, where and when will I go?

The Navy sends all career minded CEC Officers to fully-funded graduate school. That means that tuition is paid AND the Officer receives all of his/her pay to go to school full time without any additional duties. Normally, officers are selected to go to graduate school after they have been in the Navy at least 4 years but before they have 10 years of service. Deciding which school to attend and degree type is left to each individual officer, subject to Navy approval. There is an additional obligation (usually about three years) associated with going to graduate school. For a list of approved schools, consult your Accessions Officer.

12. Will CEC jobs count toward the minimum experience required to take the Professional Engineers examination?

Individual states have their own experience requirements, but all states recognize serving in the CEC as good engineering experience. Since getting a PE is a requirement for senior CEC Officers to get promoted, there are ample registered engineers within the CEC to meet all requirements. All CEC Officers are expected to pursue professional licensure.

13. Will I get to design anything?

Most design is performed by Navy civilian employees or contracted A/E firms. CEC officers are involved in defining project requirements, supervising and executing designs, but not in the "hands-on" creation of the designs. In the Seabees, where there are no civilians, CEC officers do make design decisions, but they tend to be "on-the-job" decisions that reflect the time sensitive nature of the Seabees' mission.

14. When will I get promoted?

CEC promotions mirror those in the rest of the Navy. Ask your recruiter about the timing of Navy promotions. Currently, you can expect to be promoted to Lieutenant Junior Grade (O-2) two years after OCS and to Lieutenant (O-3) two years later.

15. This sounds interesting. Who do I contact for more information?

Your first source of information should be your local Navy Officer recruiter. Look in your phone book under "Navy Recruiting" or call 1-800-USA-NAVY and you will be directed to the right person. For more detailed information about the Civil Engineer Corps contact the Western U.S. CEC Accessions Officer, LT Jonathan Witham at (619) 532-3859 or jonathan.witham@navy.mil.