

The American Society for Nondestructive Testing
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FOCUS

Service to Civilian: Transferring Military NDT Training and Experience to NDT Careers in Private Industry

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Separation or retirement from military service can be rewarding, exciting, challenging and sometimes frustrating. For many, the biggest challenge is deciding what they want to do and where they want to go in their second career. For others, it is simply how to get there. All military personnel transitioning out of the service go through the fundamental stages of self-assessment, exploration, skills development, job search, job selection and support.

In addition to discussions of some of the primary resources available to military personnel making the transition from service

to civilian careers, this article will also examine nondestructive testing (NDT) in the private sector with topics such as the differences between employer-based and third party certification, Veterans Administration and GI Bill reimbursement for certification exams, the importance of obtaining and maintaining NDT training and experience records and ways for NDT job applicants to connect with potential employers.

Transition Assistance Program

Many useful resources are available to help the service member navigate through the transition into the civilian world. Primary among these is the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). A collaborative effort developed by the U.S. Departments of Defense (DoD), Labor (DOL) and Veterans Affairs (VA), TAP provides professional

guidance and counseling, workshops, publications, automated resources, information and educational programs along with referrals to potential employers.

Service members taking advantage of TAP have the easiest time finding employment and getting established in the civilian world. Those who go it alone usually end up taking much longer to find suitable employment, miss out on opportunities and benefits and in general have a tougher time making the transition. The transition process begins with a visit to the installation's TAP office. At this meeting, TAP counselors will assist in developing an individual needs assessment, identify helpful resources, offer immediate and long-range career guidance, provide benefits

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counseling and make referrals to other service providers for additional assistance. In most cases, the TAP office is located inside the installation's family center. Pre-separation counseling appointments may be scheduled any time within a year before the planned separation date and it is strongly recommended they be scheduled no later than 180 days prior to separation date.

TAP Workshops. TAP counselors will also schedule you to attend comprehensive three-to-four day workshops. These are held at most military installations with more than 500 active duty personnel. The workshops provide employment and training information to separating or retiring armed forces members and eligible spouses within one year of separation or two years prior to retirement from the military. Facilitators from state employment services, military family support services, Department of Labor contractors, or Veterans employment and training service staff provide attendees with information covering job searches, career decision-making, current occupational and labor market conditions, resume/cover letter preparation, and interviewing techniques. Participants are also provided with an evaluation of their employability relative to the job market and receive information on the most current veterans' benefits.

TurboTAP. TurboTAP www.turbotap.org is the interactive web interface for the Transition Assistance Program that provides information and support to transitioning military service members (active duty, guard and reserve) and their families. It is intended to supplement the services offered by the Transition Assistance offices and other groups.

Occupational Information Network

Sponsored by the Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor, the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) is the primary source of occupational information for the United States. Central to the project is the online database that contains information on hundreds of standardized and occupation-specific descriptors. Continually updated by surveying a broad range of workers from each occupation, the information from the database forms the heart of O*NET OnLine, an interactive application for exploring and searching occupations. O-Net OnLine also provides a skills translator called *Crosswalk Search* that is very useful in converting the Military Occupational Code (MOC, Rating, MOS or AFSC) military jargon you may have used on the job into civilian words and phrases that potential employers will understand

www.onetonline.org/crosswalk. This is a great tool for use in developing resumes, cover letters and interview preparation. Enter the code or title for your military job in the search field for Military. The search results will break down the common elements of your military job into civilian equivalents in the following categories: tasks, tools and technology used, knowledge, skills, abilities, work activities, work context, work styles, work values and related civilian occupations. General information on wages and employment trends at both state and national levels are also provided.

Verification of Military Experience and Training

The Verification of Military Experience and Training (VMET) document (DD form 2586) is an “all services” integrated form that lists your military experience and training which may have application to employment in the private sector www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/vmet/index.jsp. It will provide dates and official titles of all formal training you attended while in the military. The form displays demographics, training, and experience information that is retrieved from your military records.

The VMET document should be used as a tool to prepare resumes and job applications, in concert with evaluation reports, training certificates, awards, transcripts, and other pertinent documents. It is not an official transcript for purposes of granting college credit, but it can be used to support your having met training and/or course requirements to qualify for civilian occupations, certificates, licenses, or programs of study. Note that the U.S. Coast Guard operates under the Department of Homeland Security and not the U.S.

Department of Defense. For this reason, DD form 2586 is not available to U.S. Coast Guard personnel.

Additional Resources

Military.com & Monster. Military.com and Monster have collaborated to form a database for military job search at www.military.com/veteran-jobs. Here you can also find dates and locations for military community job fairs offered by most military installations. These venues are always free to job-seekers and are usually free or at minimal cost to recruiters.

Additional websites offering NDT employment opportunities can be found by conducting an online search using the keywords “NDT inspection jobs.”

NDT in the Civilian Sector

In-house Certification. Most civilian NDT certification in the United States is employer-based. NDT companies certify their own NDT personnel in-house in accordance with the ASNT *Recommended Practice No. SNT-TC-1A*, which lists the guidelines recommended for the training, qualification and certification of NDT personnel. Job candidates must take Level II examinations through the prospective employer. Because these are employer-issued certifications, certification terminates when the employee leaves the company. That employee will then have to retest using a prospective new employer's examinations. For transitioning military personnel, this means they must take a prospective employer's Level II examination for each applicable test method to become certified with that company.

Third-party Certification. Third party certification can be obtained through the ASNT Central Certification

Program (ACCP) in five methods, MT, PT, RT, UT and VT. ACCP certification is transportable. That is to say, it does not expire when you change employers and can be accepted by employers without additional testing. ACCP is administered by ASNT and meets the requirements of *SNT-TC-1A*. It is valid for 5 years. To gain ACCP certification, candidates must take the ACCP Level II general and specific written examinations and hands-on practical exams for each applicable test method. (This includes writing a work instruction for each applicable test method.) Candidates can determine eligibility by comparing current training and experience records with those at www.asnt.org/certification/levelii/accpqualifications.htm. If the candidate meets or exceeds these requirements, they are eligible to apply for ACCP Level II certification. More information on ACCP certification can be found at www.asnt.org/certification/levelii/index.htm.

It should be noted that many civilian aviation/aerospace companies prefer to have their NDT personnel certified in accordance with the Aerospace Industry Association's National Aerospace Standard 410 (NAS 410), which is an employer-based standard. Veterans should check with potential employers regarding which certification system would best meet their needs.

VA/GI Bill Reimbursement

The ASNT NDT Level III, ASNT PdM Level III and IRRSP certification exams were approved for reimbursement in 2001 by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs under the GI Bill. To see the list of approved examinations and

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reimbursement amounts, go to <http://inquiry.vba.va.gov/weamspub/buildSearchLCCriteria.do>. On that page, leave the field for "L&C Name" blank, select "Certification" from the drop down menu for "LAC Category Type" and then click on the state of Ohio on the map. The search results will show you a list of items. Click on *Non Destructive Testing NDT Level III* to see a list of ASNT NDT Level III exams; *ASNT Predictive Maintenance (PDM) Level III* to see the PdM exams; and *Industrial Radiography Radiation Safety Personnel* to see the IRRSP exams. To apply for benefits, go to www.gibill.va.gov/apply-for-benefits/.

Importance of Obtaining and Maintaining Records

It is essential that transitioning military personnel have copies of their military NDT training records and documentation of their NDT work experience. No matter where you go in the NDT field, you will be required to document your military training and experience. You are strongly encouraged to get copies of any training and certification documents before you leave the service. It can be very hard to get copies of these documents after you separate from military service. Instructors often change duty stations or rotate to other assignments and can be hard to track down and records may go to permanent storage, making them even harder to access.

What records do you need? In addition to copies of your general NDT certificate(s) stating the test methods you were trained and certified in (for example, U.S. Navy C-603-3191/708Z or U.S. Air Force

J3ABP732 000), you should also try to obtain documentation such as training course outlines that show the specific number of hours of training for each individual NDT test method. For experience you should be able to use copies of your annual or semi-annual fitness reports from your NDT job supervisors. Most of your military certification documentation, such as NDT training courses, hours of training and NDT certificates should be in your personnel file. Copies of these may be in your separation packet. If they aren't, check with personnel and ask for copies now. Don't be concerned that you may end up with too much paperwork. You can always pitch what you don't need later.

You may also want to ask your current supervisor or commanding officer if they will write a "to whom it may concern" letter stating that you have been performing NDT (NDI/NDE) work equivalent to that done by an ASNT NDT Level II as follows:

An NDT Level II individual should be qualified to set up and calibrate equipment and to interpret and evaluate results with respect to applicable codes, standards, and specifications, should be thoroughly familiar with the scope and limitations of the applicable methods and should be able to organize and report the results of NDT tests.

Ask that they list the NDT test methods for which you were qualified. If your experience is documented in such a letter and you have copies of your FITREPS (fitness reports), that should be more than sufficient to document your military NDT experience.

Connecting Job Applicants with Potential Employers

ASNT Positions Wanted. As a free service to members, ASNT provides a Positions Wanted list on the ASNT website and in *Materials Evaluation (M.E.)*. Listings are posted online for 90 days and appear in *M.E.* for 60 days. To preserve privacy, each member posting a Position Wanted ad receives an anonymous department number. Interested employers may contact the Assistant Editor of *M.E.* to reply to the Position Wanted postings on the website or in the journal. The Assistant Editor will forward the employer's contact information to the member who placed the Position Wanted listing. For more information, contact *M.E.* Assistant Editor Toni Kervina at tkervina@asnt.org or (800) 222-2768 X205. Annual dues for current members of the military rank E-5 or lower are \$30 per year.

PQNDT.com. Personnel for Quality and NDT, Inc. (PQNDT) www.pqndt.com is one of the largest NDT recruiters in the U.S. with more than forty years of experience connecting NDT job candidates and potential employers. Most significant to NDT job candidates, PQNDT conducts an annual salary survey that can be downloaded in PDF format from the PQNDT website. Results of the salary survey are broken down by:

- full-time or contract employment,
- certification level,
- industry and
- region.

Dedicated solely to the NDT/quality field, the online service is free to job candidates. PQNDT offers assistance to employers and candidates across a wide range of industries that includes aerospace, petrochemical, defense, construction and utilities. 