



With Pride & Distinction

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Junior Officer Advisory Group

Vol. 13, December 2015: History of EHOPAC Coin & Tattoos in Uniform

History of USPHS Challenge Coins— EHOPAC Edition

Contributed by LCDR Erin Evans

While Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) around the Nation are getting excited about the new updated challenge coin, we at "With Pride and Distinction", wanted to dig into history's pocket to rediscover and brush the lint off of the origins of our challenge coin. As many of you know, military challenge coins have a long and proud history. Did you know that the original challenge coins were borne out of one POW's desperate need to identify himself behind enemy lines? During WWI American volunteers from all over the country filled newly formed flying squadrons. Some flyers were wealthy scions attending colleges such as Yale and Harvard, who quit school to join the war effort. In one squadron, a wealthy lieutenant ordered medallions struck in solid bronze bearing the squadron's

emblem, for each member. This same lieutenant was shot down behind enemy lines and captured by a German patrolman. Upon his imprisonment and subsequent escape, the only means of identification left to the lieutenant was his medallion.

Thus was born the challenge coin. A holder of a coin may "challenge" any individual known to have a coin. A challenge is made by withdrawing a coin and raising it in the air or by tapping on a bar or table. The challenged individuals are required to produce their coins within 60 seconds. If the challenged officers produce their coin, the challenger is obligated to buy them a drink (not necessarily alcoholic!). Similarly if the challenged individuals can't produce their coins,

With Pride & Distinction would like to highlight the history of different categories in upcoming issues. Contact us if you're interested in writing a history piece on your category!

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MODERN TATTOO GUIDANCE FOR PHS OFFICERS - DID YOU KNOW ?

It's no longer surprising to see tattoos in the workplace. Some feel that tattoos are acceptable in professional settings. Society has relaxed its views on tattoos, but in the military and other uniformed services, acceptance is more rigid. The U.S. Army made news earlier this year when they relaxed their uniform regulations where visible tattoos were concerned. Army officials explained that the changes in their policy were the result of feedback received from soldiers. As Commissioned Officers of the U.S. Public Health Service, we also have standards for what is acceptable in terms of tattoos. All uniformed services have some form of tattoo regulations to ensure that personnel maintain proper grooming and appearance standards for their branch.

Commissioned Corps Instruction [CC412.01](#) Subsection 6-7 (I), within the Personal Appearance Section, details the where and what of acceptable

tattoos. No tattoos (or body art or branding) are permitted on the head, face, neck, scalp or exposed skin. Tattoos and other markings must not be visible through or outside of the uniform. Tattoos that are exposed when the officer wears a short sleeve uniform shirt must not exceed the size criterion. As far as size goes, the officer should make a circle with his or her thumb and index finger; that is the size of tattoo permitted to be partly visible only when the officer is wearing a short sleeve uniform shirt. These instructions do not prohibit cosmetic tattooing, which may be employed to correct medical conditions.

What if you happen to already have a tattoo that exceeds the size criteria or a tattoo that is visible outside of your uniform? Well, if the tattoo existed prior to your service with the USPHS, it *may* be waivable. Obtaining a waiver is mentioned in the standards, but no process is identified for obtaining this waiver in the [CC412.01](#) guidance document. If

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they owe the challenger a drink. If any coin is dropped and *hits the floor*, the owner is obligated to buy drinks for anyone who hears or sees the coin hit, provided they have their own coin. This tradition, continued over the years, has been adopted by many organizations/units today.

The Marketing and Recruitment Subcommittee of the EHOPAC, during 2002-2004, designed and produced the first coin specifically for Environmental Health Officers. Many of you own or are familiar with this coin, designed by our very own Ret. CAPT Craig Shepard. Displayed on the coin is an image of Earth with the United States prominently positioned at its center. This image was intended to portray Earth's fragility and the crucial role EHOs have in protecting her while we focus on "Advancing and Protecting the Nation's

health. The image of Earth reminds us that EHOs have and will continue to deploy to many locations around the world to protect public health. Recently, a call was made for a new generation of EHOs to design an updated coin for our PAC. We are proud to announce that the coin, soon to be available for purchase, was once again designed by some of our very own! The new coin will highlight various diverse roles and responsibilities of the EHO, once again reminding us of the critical role we plan in protecting the Nation's health. Remember it's strongly encouraged that all EHOs proudly carry our coins, which outwardly display our sense of pride, purpose, and esprit de corps.

A coin challenge can strike at any time – don't leave home without it!



Trivia:

Who was the first female U.S. Surgeon General? *(see answer at bottom of page)*

[Did You Know continued...](#)

you find yourself in this situation you will need to send a decision memo waiver request to the Office of the Surgeon General (OSG) Uniform Coordinator.

As part of the memo to the OSG, you will need to submit full color photographs of:

- Full front view of officer in t-shirt/shorts;
- Full side views in t-shirt/shorts;
- Full back view in t-shirt/shorts;
- Close-up of the tattoo; and
- A translation of the tattoo, if inked in non-English text

The OSG will make the final decision regarding whether or not you can receive a waiver for your tattoo. Waivers are for prior service and existing tattoos only.

You are not guaranteed to receive a waiver. The OSG will use the listed criteria to determine whether your tattoo will be waived.

Having gone through this process, the best advice I have been given by a senior officer years ago was "don't get any more visible tattoos."

References:

[Uniforms and Appearance, CC412.01 \(2013\).](#)

(LCDR K. Lyons, personal communication, July 8, 2015).

Contributed by LT Katie Bante



Have uniform questions or ideas for future articles?

Email [LCDR Donna Chaney](#) or [LCDR Theresa Grant](#)