



## U.S. Public Health Service Nursing

### TIP OF THE MONTH

#### Customs and Courtesies of the Uniformed Services

May 2018



The uniformed services are steeped in tradition, which is displayed through the continued use of customs and courtesies. It is important to learn and incorporate customs and courtesies into interactions with all members of the seven uniformed services. Each branch has their own customs and courtesies, but there are a few that are universal. As a Commissioned Corps officer, it is our responsibility to represent the USPHS proudly. The following information is a refresher on a few of the more common courtesies used.

#### Courtesies for the American Flag

- On a military installation the flag is raised and lowered each day. Reveille (when the flag is raised) is usually played at 7 am and Retreat (flag is retired for the day) at 5 pm, (times can vary depending on the installation).
- When the national anthem or the bugle call "To the Colors" are played, all personnel in uniform who are not in formation are expected to stand and face the flag and hold a salute until the song is ended. If you can't see a flag, face the direction where the music is playing from.
- When wearing civilian clothes, military/uniformed personnel should face the flag and stand at attention with the right hand over the heart.
- If caught outside or in a parking lot, please don't run to get inside or under cover when the retreat music is played. This is an opportunity to pay respect to the flag and honor the sacrifices our brothers and sisters in the armed forces have made.
- Any vehicles in motion should stop while the music is playing, and occupants should sit quietly until the music ends. It may be a good idea to put the vehicle flashers on while stopped.
- Officers in uniform, upon being passed by or passing a formation carrying the national ensign uncased, shall render the hand salute. An officer not in uniform or retired officer being passed or passing such a formation may salute or face the flag and stand at attention with the right hand over the heart.
- During a ceremony, officers wearing their covers will salute on the first note of the national anthem and drop the salute on the last note.

#### Courtesies with a Senior Ranking Officer

- Rendering a salute when walking up to or by a senior ranking officer is the courteous greeting. It is encouraged to leave your right hand empty when possible so that a hand salute can be performed without difficulty. For additional information, click: [Proper Military Salute](#)
- Address a senior officer by their rank and last name unless instructed otherwise.
- When walking, riding or sitting with a senior officer, the junior officer should take the position to the senior's left.
- When entering automobiles and small boats, junior officers will enter a vehicle first (and take their appropriate seat on the senior's left). The senior officer will be the last to enter the vehicle and the first to leave it.
- Please be respectful of the chain of command. The "chain of command" is the direct line of authority with each level of command responsible to the next highest level. Bypassing your supervisor and consulting a higher authority is contrary to the correct procedure and can be detrimental to the mission. If your supervisor isn't available, and a higher authority is consulted, it is advised to inform your supervisor of the facts as soon as possible.
- During musical honors played in ceremonies, while customary for those in attendance to face the flag officer, it is not necessary for persons standing immediately beside the flag officer to face in his or her direction. Officers in uniform and under cover shall face and salute the person being honored. Musical honors includes [Ruffles and Flourishes and the Flag Officer's March](#). The number of Ruffles and Flourishes is equivalent to the number of stars of the flag officer being honored. For example, a one star flag officer will be honored with the playing of one Ruffle and Flourish.

#### Courtesies while in uniform

- When in uniform, an officer should present an orderly and clean appearance. The officer should wear the uniform proudly and properly.
- Public display of affection (PDA) such as handholding, embracing, or walking arm-in-arm is inappropriate and discouraged while in uniform.
- Indoors salutes when not wearing a cover are not rendered. No cover, no salute.

In addition to using common courtesies such as being on time for meetings, refraining from office gossip and using "please" and "thank you" whenever possible, there are some additional expectations within the different branches of the military. It is recommended that if you work or spend any time on a military installation, take time to learn that specific branch's customs and courtesies. This will go a long way in building a strong relationship with other services.

#### References:

Click for additional information: [Military Customs and Courtesies](#)

Point of contact: CAPT Casey Hadsall, CDR Jonathan Paulsel, CDR Malini Krishnan and LCDR Anastasia Hansen for the

Tip of the Month Workgroup, N-PAC Career Development Subcommittee.

**TO REQUEST A MENTOR**

**PHS-NURSE LIST SERV**