



# RHUMB LINES

*Straight Lines to Navigate By*



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## Operational Stress Control / Deployment Health Assessments

*"Deployment Health Assessments (DHA) and Post Deployment Health Re-Assessments are critical tools in helping to identify those individuals who may be struggling with stress injuries. This is a proactive process and we need every leader to ensure we're employing these fully, so we can facilitate providing the support injured Sailors and their families need and deserve."*

**– Rear Adm. Garry White, Chief of Naval Operations Special Assistant for Casualty Care**

Naval operations place extraordinary demands and stress on our Sailors and their families. Stress in excess of an individual's coping capacity can result in a loss of personnel effectiveness, reduced mission capability and injuries to our Sailors. Stress is a normal human reaction to operational and traumatic events.

### Goals of Operational Stress Control (OSC)

Everyone processes stress differently and when left unaddressed, stress injuries can develop into stress illnesses such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Other conditions associated with PTSD such as depression, anxiety and substance abuse can significantly impact the mental health and personnel readiness of our Sailors. Steps to mitigate the impact of stress include:

- Reduce the stigma associated with psychological health
- Encourage individuals to use the resources available to address the stress event and symptoms
- Engage leadership in monitoring the psychological wellness of their people to include stressors and stress outcomes following stressful events aboard ship or in the field

### Stress Is Controllable

Early intervention following stressful events can help avoid long-term stress effects. Leaders proactively providing Sailors the [tools to overcome stressors](#) inherent in Naval operations is key:

- Early intervention following stressful events can help address the stress event and mitigate adverse reaction
- Ensure Deployment Health Assessments are completed
- Build strength and understanding through open discussion
- Build a culture supportive of psychological health
- Support healing by encouraging use of existing resources

### Deployment Health Assessments (DHA)

- DoD has set up a three-phased screening process for all Sailors who deploy OCONUS (excluding ship deployments) to identify stress injuries and other health concerns requiring further assessment or treatment.
- The three phases of health assessments are: [pre-deployment](#) completed 60 days prior to deployment, [post-deployment](#) within 30 days before or after redeployment and [post-deployment re-assessment](#) completed 90-180 days post-deployment.

Commands are in the process of completing a one-time scrub (by Oct. 31) verifying all deployed Sailors' Post-Deployment Health Assessments are complete and in the Medical Readiness Reporting System (MRRS). See [NAVADMIN 207/08](#) for complete guidelines on policy and process.

### Key Messages

- Excessive stress can reduce personnel effectiveness and mission capability; operational stress control is everyone's responsibility.
- Commands must be personally involved in monitoring the DHA process to ensure that every Sailor's concerns and issues receive the appropriate attention and consideration.
- The Navy is committed to cultivating a command culture where seeking help for stress management is encouraged and accessible.

### Facts and Figures

- The number of new PTSD cases diagnosed has increased from 216 in 2003 to 947 in 2007 in Sailors after first deployment to OEF/OIF.
- OSC information and the [IA family Handbook](#) with tips on OSC can be found at: <http://www-nmcphc.med.navy.mil/>
- Returning Reservists and Active Duty personnel assigned to TRICARE Remote can contact the Post-Deployment Health Re-Assessment call center for a health care provider review at 1-888-PDHRA-99.