



RHUMB LINES

Straight Lines to Navigate By



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Religious Diversity

“As far as lies in your power, you are to protect and support the free exercise of religion of the country, and the undisturbed enjoyment of the rights of conscience in religious matters, with your utmost influence and authority.”

– George Washington

The Navy reflects the great religious diversity of our country. The majority of DoN personnel embrace religion in their efforts to be healthy people and good citizens. Religion often helps people understand their place in the world and how their military duties are part of their larger perspective on life. Many of us find a great deal of compatibility between our religious beliefs and the Navy’s core values of honor, courage and commitment.

Religious diversity...part of the Navy culture

- Spiritual celebrations play a profound role. They give us an opportunity to re-examine who we have become and what we have done with our lives.
 - This September, Muslims around the world observe Ramadan, a sacred month of fasting in which they make a special effort to be true to themselves and act unselfishly. They contemplate their faith, spend less time in worrying about every day life, and take special care to give charitably to the poor.
 - On 29 September, Jews celebrate Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. Ten days later they observe Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. On this, the most solemn day of the Jewish year, they ask forgiveness for broken promises to God.
- Many Sailors and Marines identify with established religions and religious faith expressions, yet a growing number of young people see spirituality differently. They draw from multiple traditions to form their own spiritual expressions. Many of them have a concept of a higher power and witness its influence on their lives, yet do not identify with traditional faith groups. They see religion or spirituality as something they draw on as needed, to help them through difficult moments or to mark significant achievements.

Respecting and accommodating spiritual growth

- Our diversity of religious beliefs requires more than a mere awareness of a person’s spirituality...we need an environment that respects and accommodates religious expression.
- Commanders and commanding officers are required to accommodate the diverse religious needs within their commands while respecting beliefs that may be different from their own.
- Navy Chaplains and Religious Program Specialists are uniquely positioned to help commanding officers meet the spiritual needs of Sailors. They are trained in accommodation, sensitive to all religious expressions and are the command experts in communicating with religious organizations and faith communities.
- Resources to assist commanders in identifying which days might require special observances can be found in [NAVADMIN 099/08](#).

Key Messages

- The term diversity encompasses not only the categories of race, age, gender and national origin, but also religion.
- Like the nation, the Navy is religiously diverse. Celebrations such as Ramadan, Rosh Hashanah and Holy Cross Day exemplify the richness of our religious expression.

Facts & Figures

- The most recent Religious Faith Code data reveals 76.5% of Sailors and Marines list some religious preference.
- Navy personnel identify themselves with more than 109 different faith groups in the most recent Religious Faith Code Report.
- We have 804 active component Navy chaplains who represent more than 90 faith groups.