PMCS Certification
A Mechanized Infantry Combat Multiplier

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Over the years, mechanized infantry units have faced the dilemma of trying to manage and balance training with the demands of maintenance. The question is: How do we spend less time maintaining our fleet and more time training on our mission essential tasks list (METLs)? The answer is "doing it right the first time," while enforcing high standards that are institutionalized over time and ingrained into our operators and leaders. This can be accomplished with a certification program that allows us to balance readiness and training. At the same time, units must let their NCOs and leaders know that if they do it right the first time, they will have more time to train their soldiers on collective tasks.

A high-quality PMCS certification program will help a unit do each of the following things:

- Learn a common set of PMCS standards, techniques, and procedures.
- Learn what is expected of each soldier and leader.
- Share knowledge with each other.
- Identify problems and trends.
- Seek new ideas to improve maintenance operations.
- Improve maintenance proficiency and efficiency.

Proper PMCS is the baseline for all unit maintenance. According to Field Manual (FM) 9-43-1, *Maintenance Operations and Procedures*, "the cornerstone of unit maintenance is the operator/crew performing PMCS from applicable operator's series (–10 level) technical manuals." As I have found both in the field and in garrison, rigorous adherence to PMCS schedules will identify deficiencies before they become disasters. The next step, however, is to ensure that operators and crews actually *know how* to conduct the PMCS; this knowledge does not come entirely from a manual, but also from an effective certification program for all soldiers in the unit.

PMCS certification is a training program that can take three to five days; although it is time consuming, a commander will find this certification is critical to the accomplishment of his unit's maintenance—and hence, combat—mission. The program is designed to teach soldiers at all levels the correct way to conduct PMCS. It will help prevent shortcuts in PMCS, highlight the importance of maintenance, and increase leader involvement. It will also increase a soldier's general level of maintenance knowledge and establish a standard for the battalion. These learning points will have a positive effect on the unit and, by improving the overall maintenance program, will increase the combat readiness of the entire unit.

TOPIC	LENGTH
DAY 1	
Introduction/Safety	1 hour
5988-E/Parts Ordering Flow	3 hours
M998 PMCS Class	1 hour
Practical Exercise	2 hours
DAY 2	
M2A2 BFV Class	1 hour
Practical Exercise	4 hours
M113/M577/M1064 Class	1 hour
Practical Exercise	2 hours
DAY 3	
M35A2 Class	1 hour
Practical Exercise	3 hours
M923/M936 Class	1 hour
Practical Exercise	2 hours
DAY 4	
M977/M978 Class	1 hour
Practical Exercise	2 hours
Generator/Steam Cleaner Class	1 hour
Practical Exercise	3 hours
DAY 5	
Testing	2 hours
Retraining	As required
Retesting	As required

Following is a suggested five-day training program that will cover each type of vehicle in the fleet of a mechanized infantry battalion. It can be modified to be shorter or to focus only on specific vehicles; but this program will teach soldiers how to conduct a PMCS on all vehicles in the battalion, and will also address other maintenance related topics such as the flow of a DA Form 5988-E, *Equipment Maintenance and Inspection Worksheet.*

The practical exercises have been designed to allow enough time to conduct thorough, correct PMCS. Hands-on training is critical for this type of training, and the practical exercises will help soldiers learn exactly how to inspect the vehicle. Although the course can be modified to address only certain types of vehicles, the first several classes on safety, DA Form 5988-Es, and parts flow are highly recommended.

Day two will cover the tracked vehicles within an infantry battalion. Because of the similarities between M113s, M577s, and M1064s (mor-

tar carriers), these have been included in one class. A proper PMCS of a Bradley fighting vehicle, the most important item of equipment in the fleet, is estimated to take four hours.

The third day will cover cargo wheeled vehicles, including 2.5- and 5-ton trucks, and day four will cover both heavy expanded-mobility tactical truck (HEMTT) cargo and fueler vehicles.
The fourth day will also address generators and steam cleaners. As we all know, a unit must maintain these items of equipment to ensure smooth field and garrison operations. Day five will be a final testing day, with time allotted for retraining and retesting. Testing should include both a written examination and a hands-on exercise, in which students must identify faults on the vehicles during their PMCS.

In today's dynamic Army, leaders and soldiers are often faced with many different tasks at once, and PMCS is another mission to add to the day's agenda. Because of the fast-paced nature of most units, this will lead to shortcuts in PMCS procedures. Over time, these shortcuts become accepted, and as such, may result in overlooked deficiencies. More problematic is the arrival of new soldiers in the unit who learn bad habits—such as maintenance shortcuts—from the start; this leads to developing even further departures from correct procedures and thus will lead to an improper PMCS. A periodic certification program will remedy this problem by making sure all soldiers in the unit are familiar with "what right looks like." Additionally, new soldiers should receive the training shortly after arriving in the unit.

Placing importance on PMCS certification will also reinforce a commander's emphasis on his maintenance program. Too often, maintenance is an afterthought in daily activities; to many, the battalion training meeting or M16 range seem to be the most important event of the day. This can cause leaders and soldiers to put maintenance in the back of their minds, but strict enforcement of a PMCS training program will sustain focus on maintenance. Without this focus, the unit's readiness will suffer, and the deadline report will grow at a pace that would frighten the most seasoned battalion maintenance officer. Most important, the unit's combat readiness will be seriously degraded.

Like most soldier tasks in the Army, PMCS is perishable without practice and, sadly, it is one that our NCOs and leaders may forget over time. As with all other soldier activities, PMCS is an event that should receive NCO supervision for proper execution. Unfortunately, many of our leaders cannot provide this supervision because they may have lost the expertise themselves. Leaders must be included as participants in a PMCS certification program to refresh their skills and ensure they have the knowledge necessary to supervise their subordinates. More leader involvement will improve the effectiveness of PMCS and will motivate the operators. A soldier will be more eager to conduct the task to standard once he finds his supervisor coaching and mentoring, and no longer absent from the motor pool.

Along these lines, leaders will learn more about their individual responsibilities regarding PMCS. It is critical that they understand what is expected of them:

- Be involved in motor pool operations and PMCS.
- Be responsible for all equipment, and know its status at all times.
- Train soldiers correctly in maintenance operations.
- Understand the system (automation, requisition flow, 5988-E flow, etc.).
- Get appropriate operators licensed for all equipment.
- Support the PMCS Certification Program.
- Get the resources required for soldiers to do jobs safely and efficiently.

First line supervisors must also be aware of their own obligations regarding PMCS. These include the following:

- Meet their leaders' expectations.
- Get personally licensed on all equipment in the section.
- Attend PMCS Certification, and ensure that soldiers do the same.
- Supervise motor pool operations/PMCS expertly.
- Pick up 5988-Es no later than the day before PMCS .
- Turn in 5988-Es no later than the close of business on the day PMCS is performed.
- Make sure the drivers or operators assist mechanics during conduct of services and PMCS.
- Coordinate directly with the platoon sergeant, the company XO, and company maintenance team chief regarding services or other maintenance operations.

Finally, each individual soldier should understand his own responsibilities:

- Conduct competent and accurate PMCS according to PMCS Certification Program.
- Get Driver's/Operator's license. Stay current.
- Be responsible for and know status of signed-for equipment.
- Conduct Weekly PMCS as required.
- Turn in 5988-E to first-line supervisor promptly.
- Demonstrate pride in ownership.
- Immediately report problems to first-line supervisor (vehicle won't start, left unsecured, etc.).
- Report shortages to first-line supervisor (safety items, BII, manuals, tools, etc.).
- Dispatch vehicle properly.

The certification program is also valuable as a tool for assessing the knowledge of soldiers, particularly mechanics. As the soldiers responsible for the verification of faults, mechanics must also be tested on their understanding of PMCS procedures. Commanders will find that assessing their mechanics' proficiency will indicate whether further training should be implemented in the form of mechanic certification. Periodic execution of the program will also provide feedback on its effectiveness and how well the soldiers have retained the information. As with all training, after-action reviews (AARs) should be conducted to determine how well the program works, and to identify changes that will improve its execution.

A quality PMCS certification program should also address the steps

taken with a completed 5988-E and the subsequent parts flow. Many operators and crews are not familiar with what happens to a submitted 5988-E, how parts are ordered, and how to verify their status. Understanding this procedure will accomplish two things: it will teach soldiers the importance of properly filling out a 5988-E, and it will give them the knowledge to ensure that parts are on order and track their status. They can therefore take a more active role in ensuring the 5988-E is correct for their equipment, and not simply conducting the PMCS and turning in the form to their supervisor. As a platoon sergeant once remarked to me, "Most leaders don't understand what happens to a 5988-E; a good PMCS certification program can fix that. I have been through several myself and now I actually understand what the parts status codes mean."

Perhaps most important, an effective certification program will establish a standard for the unit. Each member of the battalion will understand the proper way to conduct PMCS, and each leader will be able to supervise the execution. Without a unit standard, operators will be free to conduct the PMCS however they may interpret the TM; teaching each soldier the right way in a hands-on environment will eliminate this problem. Soldiers who move from one section to another will follow the same procedure for PMCS wherever they go, and will be able to enforce it once they become leaders and supervisors. A good PMCS certification program will get everyone on "the same sheet of music."

As we have seen, it is imperative that units develop and implement a PMCS certification program. Executing such a program will prevent shortcuts, emphasize maintenance in the unit, increase leader involvement, and establish a standard throughout the battalion. It will also increase the knowledge of the individual soldier and give him a better understanding of the reasons for conducting PMCS. As the baseline for all maintenance programs, proper PMCS will improve the performance of the unit's equipment and therefore its overall combat readiness. As a combat multiplier, PMCS certification will prove critical on the next battlefield, when our soldiers go to war with equipment that works right the first time, every time.

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