



National Guard Uses Technical Colleges to Train Soldiers

By Captain James B. Richmond

In a joint venture, Kentucky Army National Guard engineers and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) have implemented a program that provides Soldiers the opportunity to attend college-accredited classes in carpentry, electrical wiring, plumbing, and heavy equipment operation during drill weekends. The Kentucky National Guard is transitioning two mechanized combat engineer battalions—the 201st Engineer Battalion and the 206th Engineer Battalion—into a multirole engineer force.

The 201st Engineer Battalion commander realized that the Soldiers needed training in their new military occupational specialty at a beginner's level, but they were waiting on the equipment to be fielded to support it. The unit thought of various ways to train—such as building small sheds and roads at local training areas—but they kept running into the problem of equipment. In a collaborative effort, the 206th Engineer Battalion commander and an instructor at KCTCS came up with a unique way to solve the problem: Train the Soldiers at the local technical schools, using school equipment and certified instructors, thus giving college credit to the Soldiers. At first it seemed too good to be true, but after doing their homework both battalion commanders agreed that it was the best course of action.

The solution for paying for the training was made possible by the Kentucky Tuition Incentive Program. Under this program, Soldiers can receive tuition assistance for attending any state-funded school, as long as they are in good standing in their unit. The battalions presented the program to the State Education Officer and gained her support.



A Soldier trains on carpentry skills under the supervision of instructors from the Kentucky Community and Technical College System.



Soldiers from the 207th Horizontal Company, 201st Engineer Battalion, learn to operate loaders and backhoes.

The second problem was how to overlay the accreditation requirements of these courses during a National Guard training-year calendar of one weekend a month and still be able to conduct the mandatory training requirements of being an engineer Soldier. The brigade operations noncommissioned officer arranged a conference with the KCTCS leadership and developed a training calendar that required five drill weekends.

Together they developed a training plan that allowed the instructors the time needed to teach the skills that would also meet the requirements for the college credit. The Soldiers had a whole day of drill to dedicate to instruction, allowing school administrators to develop a lesson plan that worked.

The school system was able to offer the following courses:

- Beginning Carpentry Lab to 21W (carpentry and masonry specialist) Soldiers
- Installation of Plumbing and Fixtures to 21K (plumber) Soldiers
- Basic Alternating Current (AC) Circuits Lab to 21R (interior electrician) Soldiers
- Heavy Equipment Operation to 21E (heavy construction equipment operator) Soldiers

The 201st Engineer Battalion began training with KCTCS in early 2007 and will complete the final coursework in August or September.

This program is a win-win situation. The Soldiers get quality instruction in their new MOS and college credit, KCTCS enrollment is up, and no equipment was required other than what was on hand already.



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