

Annual Command History
Guidelines for Preparation and Submission
for Active, Reserve, and National Guard Engineer Battalions and BEBs

1. General.

a. The Annual Command History (ACH) is a written account of the key activities of a military unit. It contains both a discussion of important events and an analysis of the unit's efforts at meeting its mission requirements. The ACH can be extremely valuable to future commanders and staff officers if it documents the origin or evolution of critical issues, programs, or projects. In this sense, it serves as the institutional memory of the unit and, collectively, of the Regiment. The ACH can also help publicize an unit's achievements and build pride among its members. Finally, the document can help orient new members of units to the major mission areas of the activity and the major initiatives and efforts of the past and present.

b. Organizational input from subordinate units are the essential base documents for the preparation of the battalion-level ACH. For Engineer battalions and BEBs, we suggest starting with the subordinate companies' Itschner submissions. The battalion-level ACH documents the major events of the year and provides the requisite who, what, when, where, how, and why associated with that event. The "why" is the most important element. Attached to the organization's history are important documents which provide more detailed information than that contained in the basic report. These documents include AARs, staffing papers, orders, correspondence, reports, studies, etc. The ACH can be prepared as a general narrative outline of events with the attached documents providing the requisite detail.

c. In general, more information, more details, more names, and more photos are usually best.

2. Preparation.

a. The individual charged with the preparation of an activity's history should first canvass key personnel on the major actions, events, and initiatives of the past year. Examples of these could be:

1) Changes in mission, requirements, procedures, resources, organization, personnel, or performance.

2) Major missions, training events, projects, programs, or studies undertaken or initiated.

3) Major developments or efforts in ongoing programs, projects, or studies.

b. The action officer should then gather the critical documents which explain the who, what, when, where, how, and why of these actions/events. In some instances, the action officer may need to talk with points of contact of individuals charged with specific actions or the management of the program. In addition to using these documents to write the report, the action officer should reproduce those documents which need to be retained in the installation's historical research collection or archives in the USAES History Office.

c. Finally, the action officer compiles whatever statistical information of importance to the report. This may be the number of soldiers trained, the budget and the funds spend, actions completed, retention numbers, awards, or disciplinary action. Associated with this is a list or roster of key personnel and changes in key leadership positions.

3. Organization. The report will have the following sections.

a. Mission Statement.

b. Organization and Management. This section contains the roster and photos of key personnel, appropriate statistics such as budget, changes in organization or mission, new management initiatives implemented, etc.

c. Training. This section includes discussion and analysis of the training program, changes in the METL, training needs or deficiencies, new initiatives, and appropriate statistics. This section also details leader development programs.

d. Operations. This section deals with the major events or activities of the unit. This section deals with significant actions, events, decisions, or initiatives which occurred during the year. Important developments in existing programs or the beginnings of new programs should also be discussed.

e. Support. This part of the report details the support provided by the activity to the installation, soldiers and their families, and/or the greater community. Examples of installation support would be assistance in building maintenance, renovation or repair, or sponsorship of programs for installation personnel. Activities of family support groups, sponsorship of single soldier programs, and support of youth activities would be examples of support to soldiers and families. Support to the local community would include such things as sponsorship of Boy and Girl Scout events.

4. Format. The document will have the have the following features:

1) Print. Font and size IAW AR 25-50.

2) Margins. 1 inch left, right, and top. 1 and 1/2 inches on bottom.

3) Pages numbered bottom center.

4) Photos. Photos included and clearly captioned.

5) Charts or graphs numbered and identified within the text.

5. Common Deficiencies.

a. Lack of substance. The report details routine activities without any discussion of importance or relevance. Reports refer to decisions, studies, or events without explaining why these were important.

b. Insufficient background. The report identifies an issue but fails to explain the context or background of that issue. The action officer failed to understand that the reader may not be informed or aware of all the aspects of an issue or event needed to put the issue into context.

c. Jargon and technical language. The report is burdened with language or acronyms which are known or understood only by those closely involved in the action, program, or event. This often results in a narrative which is meaningless to anyone who does not have the technical knowledge or experience to understand or decipher the terms or acronyms.

d. Lack of documentation. Many reports have no accompanying documentation. AR 870-5 requires commanders and their historians to identify historically significant documents and preserve them for use by future leaders and staff. The Historical Research Collection is, by regulation, the collection point for these documents. However, histories should not be a series of bullets with the notation of "See Document X".

6. Submission. The battalion ACH will be submitted in hard copy or digitized format, with attachments, to the USAES History Office no later than 1 March of the following year. Documents attached to the report will also be in hard copy. The unit should retain one copy of the report in their organizational history file.

7. Questions on the preparation of the organizational history should be referred to the USAES Command Historian's office at (573) 563-6365 or usarmy.leonardwood.engineer-schl.mbx.hqrfi@mail.mil.