



Staff Sgt. Harold Quezada, from the 827th Engineer Company of Horsehead, N.Y., works on a grader engine while in training at the Senior Construction Equipment Repairer Course at Fort McCoy's Regional Training Site-Maintenance. (Photo by Scott T. Sturkol)

Training for Reserve, Guard Motor Pool NCOs Gets More Hands On

By Scott T. Sturkol

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The Regional Training Site (RTS)-Maintenance facility at Fort McCoy, Wisc., teaches a variety of courses to more than 700 Soldiers each year. One course — the Senior Construction Equipment Repairer Course — impacts motor pools across the Army.

RTS-Maintenance is the only Reserve Component schoolhouse Army wide to teach this 28-day course to Guard and Reserve Soldiers.

This also means the students who graduate set out to lead motor pools at their units and installations. Course capacity is set at 12 students and can also include active-duty Soldiers.

Students who complete this course return to their units as senior mechanics who maintain and fix construction equipment, said RTS-Maintenance Chief Instructor, Master Sgt. Christine Wolf. They can also serve as motor pool sergeants where they can pass their knowledge and skills onto others, and maintenance management at motor pools.

The course's program of instruction (POI) recently was expanded to include more maintenance-management training, Wolf said. "By expanding the POI, we create more opportunities for learning for our students."

Staff Sgt. Dean Kulppi, a student in the course from the Army Reserve's 1st Brigade, 75th Division at Arling-

ton Heights, Ill., said he thought the POI changes “have really made this advanced leadership course better.”

“It has increased the ‘hands-on’ portion of training and focused in on training that is more relevant to what we will be doing as senior mechanics,” Kulppi said.

Soldiers attending the course are aligned under the 91 “Lima” Army career field designation series as 91L3O.

Noncommissioned officers assigned to become senior construction equipment repairers are required to supervise and perform unit, direct and general support maintenance on construction equipment, according to the official Army description for the career field.

Construction equipment repairers, in general, are responsible for maintaining trucks, bulldozers, graders, power shovels and other heavy equipment that is needed for construction operations.

Each student participates in classroom sessions and “hands-on” training in military occupational specialty-specific tasks. The training teaches students to troubleshoot electrical, diesel engine, hydraulic, power train and brake systems. Battlefield damage assessment and repair as well as recovery operations also are taught.

The POI change also helps increase the life of the equipment being maintained, said Course Instructor Staff Sgt. Dana Freeman.

“Knowing good maintenance management is absolutely necessary to operate a motor pool,” Freeman said. “Army equipment gets a lot of use, so, training our students in sound maintenance practices, in turn, extends the life of that equipment.”

In each course, three instructors are assigned to support and teach 12 students, Wolf said.

“First and foremost, that student-to-teacher ratio is needed to ensure safety,” Wolf said. “The students work on large pieces of equipment in this course, so it’s essential to make sure we follow and teach all the important levels of safety.”

Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Severson, a 91L3O course instructor who has more than 30 years of experience as a military and civilian mechanic, said students also receive a high level of support.

“In addition to safety, having three people available for each class provides a broad level of expertise, experience and support,” Severson said. “It’s not often in training situations you will have this many instructors available.”

Some students travel half-way around the world to attend this course.

“I’m just glad to be here to be able to learn more about being a mentor and a leader to my junior Soldiers in construction equipment maintenance,” said Staff Sgt. Romy Laguana from the 1224th Engineer Support Company of the Guam National Guard in Hagatna, Guam.

“The only time it gets cold in Guam is when you open the freezer,” said Laguana, referring to being in Wisconsin for the first time. “But I have received a warm welcome here. The (RTS-Maintenance) facility has excellent instructors, the post facilities are set up well, and I can tell there are a lot of civilian workers here who really care about Soldiers.”

Overall, RTS-Maintenance trains Soldiers in a host of courses that also include Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic, Wheeled Vehicle Recovery, Standard Army Maintenance System — Enhanced, and more.

The Senior Construction Equipment Repairer Course has been taught at Fort McCoy since RTS-Maintenance was established as a tenant organization in 1989, Wolf said.

The organization has multiple training facilities, including nine classrooms that are fully-equipped with the latest in digital and computer-based audiovisual equipment, as well as field training sites with mire pits for vehicle recovery training.

For more information about RTS-Maintenance, call 608-388-3938. ■



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