

DISTRIBUTION CENTER ORGANIZATION, MISSION, AND FUNCTIONS

1. Introduction. The Department of Defense (DoD) distribution center system is designed to provide for the receiving, storage, maintenance, and shipping functions in support of the United States armed forces. Each service and agency uses a unique organizational structure to accomplish its mission; however, the overall operations are similar for each distribution center. This chapter examines the organization, mission, and functions of a DLA distribution center. Special emphasis is placed on how a distribution center functions within its environment and the policy and decision making mechanisms in the organization. Also, how a distribution center is structured to accomplish its mission is addressed.

2. Objectives. After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

- a. Describe environmental factors which impact on the operation of a distribution center.
- b. Identify mission support elements and related functions.
- c. Identify mission elements and related functions.
- d. Describe the organizational relationships that exist between the mission support and mission elements.

3. Reference. DLAM 5810.1, Organization of DLA Field Activities.

4. Distribution center Mission.

a. The mission is the key influence on distribution center organization and functions. The general mission of the distribution center is to support the soldier in the field by serving as the primary storage, maintenance, and shipping point for the wholesale supply system. The distribution center is the major point of entry for materiel into the military distribution system. Each distribution center performs receipt,

storage, maintenance, preservation, packaging, and shipment of materiel as directed by the inventory control points. Distribution center maintenance involves the overhaul of parts, equipment, and weapon systems. A distribution center with an ammunition mission is responsible for accomplishing receipt, storage, shipping, renovation, demilitarization, and surveillance of ammunition. Also, the distribution center performs quality control functions with regard to its assigned missions. The distribution center maintains liaison with, and provides assistance to, users of DoD materiel. Furthermore, the distribution center provides command administration, management, logistical support, training, and other related support and service functions to distribution center elements and tenant activities located on the installation.

b. The specific mission of a DLA distribution center is determined by the workloading and policy guidance it receives from Headquarters, DLA. DLA distribution centers perform storage functions for the DLA, General Services Administration, and all military services.

5. Organization of the DoD Distribution Center System.

a. The DoD distribution center system is a significant part of the military distribution system designed to provide effective support to the soldier.

b. DLA distribution centers receive their guidance from the Defense Distribution Center (DDC). The DDC provides command and control to all DoD distribution distribution centers.

6. Environmental Influences on Distribution center Decisions and Policy.

a. Major management decisions that affect the overall operation of the distribution center

are linked to the operating environment. The distribution center does not exist in a vacuum and managers must consider environmental factors during the decision making process. These factors identify the impact the distribution center has on the community in which it is located. For example, decisions to alter the mission of a distribution center, change level of employment, install special pollution control systems, or use of commercial activities can impact on the quality of life and prosperity of surrounding communities. Moreover, external factors influence decisions and policies made by distribution center managers.

b. The environmental factors which directly impact the management of distribution center operations are many and varied. Nevertheless, there are four factors generally believed to be most important. They are social, economic, governmental, and technological.

(1) **Social.** Today, distribution center managers must be keenly aware of social concerns of the community especially those dealing with social responsibility of distribution center management. These concerns influence many major functions of the distribution center organization. The issues are clear and familiar. Citizens are concerned with the management of hazardous wastes and the storage of hazardous materials. Distribution center managers must take action to preserve the environment. Equal employment opportunities and cultural enrichment programs rank high on the list of community social concerns. Society has expectations of the distribution center and its management policies. Distribution center managers must demonstrate social responsibility to the surrounding community. This concern is seen in the participation by distribution center employees in community activities (e.g., special olympics), clubs, and distribution center "open house" days.

(2) **Economic.** Distribution center managers must plan in accordance with the availability of resources in the local community and the economic impact of the distribution center on the community. For instance,

distribution center managers must be aware of the availability of local business, industry, and transportation assets to support distribution center operations. Moreover, the community depends on the distribution center as a stable source of employment and income for its working population. Additionally, businesses look to the distribution center as a source of income with regard to business contracts. The distribution center adds millions of dollars into local businesses and households. As a result, communities and their congressional representatives take an active interest in employment levels and mission workloading of the distribution center. It is a major factor in the economic well-being of a community.

(3) **Governmental.** It is difficult to separate the close environmental relationships between social, economic, and governmental factors. The Government plays a dual role in the decision making process. It acts as employer and protector to the employed. The distribution center organization is scrutinized far more than private industry regarding its procedures and policies. This is because the Government is considered to be the representative of all the people. The Government's historical guarantee of equal opportunity for each citizen creates increasing demands for entitlements from forces both internal and external to the distribution center. This equality and fairness of treatment has become broadened to include many political, social, and economic demands now defined as rights. In effect, the Government, and the Government-run distribution center, is expected to fulfill a variety of public needs and many private wants as well. This dual role has caused much turmoil and many changes in the distribution center's functioning and policies. To illustrate, this can be seen in the area of commercial activities. The Government has sought the goals of business competition and the prevention of business pursuits that restrain trade or put the Government in direct competition with private industry. No matter what position the Government and distribution center management take on the issue of contracting out distribution center functions to private industry, the interests of some groups

will not be realized. The task of balancing the interests of the distribution center mission with the public's political expectations and demands is a demanding job for any manager.

(4) **Technological.** Distribution center managers are faced with increased demands of force modernization and rapidly changing technology. This has accentuated the need to modernize existing physical plants. Many DLA distribution centers are currently under major modernization of existing facilities and construction of new facilities. Today, distribution centers must be modernized to successfully capitalize on many economic advantages. Distribution center managers must consider the merits of implementing new technological advances in an effort to productively accomplish the overall mission of supporting the soldier in the field. The functioning of distribution centers is influenced by the improvements that have been made in such areas as two-dimensional bar code labeling, laser card automated manifesting, radio frequency tag monitoring, automated materiel release order tracking systems, and mechanized stock retrieval systems. The challenge is to respond to the new demands with better utilization of technological innovations. In other words, "working smarter, not harder." Increasing workload and limited resources challenge managers to make good use of technology to accomplish the goals of the organization.

7. Organization of the Distribution center.

a. The organizational structure of a distribution center is designed based on its mission. The purpose of the organization is to ensure that missions are accomplished within established standards maximizing the use of resources. The distribution center organization consists of three operational levels. The command, mission support, and mission levels are the three organizational tiers of the distribution center. These subdivisions demonstrate the key relationships and interdependence of each element within the

organization. DLA distribution centers are organized based on a standard organizational structure. However, organizations may vary due to unique mission requirements.

b. **Command Level.** The command level element provides the command and control to manage distribution center operations.

(1) **Distribution center Commander.** The distribution center commander has responsibility for managing all distribution center operations. The commander normally delegates operational control to the individual distribution center directors. The distribution center commander is viewed as a manager of a small city establishing policy and providing guidance and leadership for mission support and mission directorates. Tenant activities located at a distribution center normally have their own individual commanders.

(2) **Deputy Commander/Administrator.** The deputy, usually a civilian, acts as the program coordinator for the commanding officer. This includes directing and monitoring the development, review, and execution of distribution center operating plans and programs. He provides the continuity and "institutional memory" to the command group.

c. **Mission Support Level.** The central staff elements provide management and administration for installation and mission support requirements. Installation support involves providing centralized housekeeping and specialized local programs; whereas, mission support elements are required to resource, manage, and sustain the distribution center activities to accomplish the assigned missions. Installation and mission support is provided by the following central staff elements:

(1) **Personal Staff** (functional experts for distribution center commander).

(a) **Office of Equal Opportunity.** Plans and directs the distribution center Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Program for

civilians and the Equal Opportunity (EO) Program for military personnel. The office is a direct link to the distribution center commander for EEO and EO conditions in the distribution center and community. Therefore, it carries out functions such as analyzing discrimination complaints to identify problem areas and develop plans for their elimination. Also, conducts statistical and/or other special studies to identify out of balance employment situations or inequitable management practices.

(b) Public Affairs Office. Plans, coordinates, and supervises all public affairs activities for the distribution center. Formulates distribution center information programs, plans, and policies designed to further understanding, cooperation, and support for the mission of the distribution center and DLA. All official contact with the news media is coordinated through this office, which is located at the Defense Distribution Center (DDC).

(2) The Office of Counsel. Provides legal support and guidance for distribution center operations, and is located at the DDC.

(3) Office of Distribution Administration. The mission of this element is to provide general administration and personnel support for the distribution center. This includes civilian and military personnel programs, education services, community and family activities, mobilization training, and emergency operations. This directorate includes the following elements:

(a) Civilian Personnel. Comprises the distribution center Civilian Personnel Program to include recruitment, placement, training, and career development; position and pay management; and management-employee labor relations services for the distribution center.

(b) Military Personnel. Includes soldier's programs and provides direct military personnel service to all units located on the distribution center.

(c) Community and Family Activities. Comprises business and operational aspects of the Installation Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Fund (IMWRF) and other community and family activity programs.

(d) Mobilization Planning and Reserve Component Training. Includes the DLA emergency/mobilization/contingency/readiness plans and programs for the distribution center. Comprises the Emergency Operations Center and crisis management and crisis planning/operations; the Reserve and National Guard Active Duty Training and Inactive Duty Training programs.

(e) Education Services. Includes the DLA Continuing Education System in the provision of education programs and opportunities for military personnel.

(4) Office of Distribution Financial Management. The mission of this office is financial and manpower management. This includes providing programming, budgeting (spending plan), finance and accounting, management review and analysis, and industrial engineering services. Also, this directorate provides manpower and organization management. This office is located at the DDC.

(5) Systems Management Division. The mission of this element is to provide integrated information management services and support to the distribution center. Information management encompasses all disciplines to include telecommunications, automation, office automation, visual information, records management, and publishing and printing. This directorate includes the following elements:

(a) Operations and Systems Integration. Provides integrated staff management oversight and supervision of the operational information management activities. Ensures new and upgraded information systems are integrated into the force.

(b) Resource Management and Plans. Develops the integrated information

requirements and the integrated architectures, configurations, policies, plans, programs, and budgets that support them.

(c) **Operational Information Activities.** These activities are the operational entities that provide information support in terms of information services and products to the distribution center. This includes the Automated Data Processing (ADP) installation which is responsible for operating the Distribution Standard System (DSS) in support of the distribution mission. Other operational entities include micrographic service centers, visual information support activities, telecommunications message centers, records holding areas, mail and distribution centers, classified document holding areas, printing plants and duplication centers, and storage and distribution centers for standard forms.

(6) **Public Safety Division.** The mission of this office is to formulate, direct, and manage the execution of law enforcement, security, intelligence, and terrorist counter action programs. This office includes the following elements:

(a) **Plans.** Comprises planning and administrative functions. This includes functions such as maintaining liaison with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies; developing appropriate physical security plans; and developing comprehensive proactive terrorist counter action plans and programs.

(b) **Security.** Comprises law enforcement and security programs and policies. This includes functions such as providing for security of distribution center personnel and property; providing law enforcement and investigative capabilities; and operating and maintaining intrusion detection and other electronic detection and surveillance devices.

(c) **Counterintelligence.** Comprises intelligence ADP security and Terrorist Counter Action policies and programs. This includes functions such as managing all special and

traditional intelligence and counter intelligence programs; managing operational security and other programs that provide for the investigation and prevention of espionage, sabotage, subversion, other security violations, and enemy intelligence activities; and managing the ADP Security Program (i.e., physical, personnel, procedural, software, and communications security).

(d) **The Safety Office.** Enforces safety programs to reduce injuries and costs associated with accidents and ensures that the distribution center is in compliance with all government safety regulations.

(7) **Distribution Center Operating Equipment Division.** The mission of this division is to direct the accomplishment of the distribution center equipment management program. This includes providing motor transportation services for the distribution center and maintenance of distribution center operating equipment. This division includes the following elements:

(a) **Resource Management.** Addresses the distribution center operating logistics goals and objectives by determining adequate resources for execution. This includes functions such as providing administrative support; performing industrial engineering services; and managing resources.

(b) **Equipment Operations.** Comprises a motor transportation system for the distribution center. This includes functions such as controlling the dispatching of distribution center mobile equipment; providing taxi and bus services; issuing and maintaining records of operators' permits; and administering aptitude and road tests.

(c) **Supply and Services.** Comprises the distribution center equipment management program consisting of the authorization, acquisition, property book accountability, utilization, maintenance, modernization, redistribution, and disposal of

installation equipment. This includes functions such as developing and administering the capital equipment acquisition and replacement program; administering the authorization, utilization, and disposal of distribution center equipment; and administering the centralized tool accountability program.

(d) Maintenance. Comprises the maintenance program on distribution center mobile equipment including allied equipment and production equipment. This includes functions such as performing maintenance on distribution center assigned equipment including materials handling, administrative vehicles, engineer equipment, locomotives, and allied items; maintaining equipment records; and making minor repairs and adjustments to equipment.

(e) Plans and Operations. Comprises logistic support plans for mobilization, emergency, disaster, and special plans and exercises. This includes functions such as providing for emergency operations and managing the logistic operations center if activated.

(8) Facility Engineering Division. Comprises the planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling of all facilities engineering and housing functions that are part of the distribution center's mission. This includes functions such as managing all environmental programs for the distribution center; managing the operation, maintenance, repair, and minor construction of the distribution center's utility plants and systems; and managing the maintenance, repair, and improvement of the distribution center's buildings, structures, roads, railroads, hardstands, airfields, and grounds.

d. **Mission Level.** The responsibility of the mission elements is to accomplish the specified mission of the **Defense Distribution Center**. The mission of the distribution center is to plan, program, manage, and accomplish efficient and effective receipt, storage, inventory, preservation/

packaging, issuing, and shipping of distribution center (i.e., retail) and mission (i.e., wholesale) supplies. This includes performing safe demilitarization and proper disposal of materiel as required; providing for internal movement of materiel; and exercising leadership in the analysis of the distribution mission and in executing major initiatives to improve quality, cost, and productivity. This directorate includes the following elements:

(1) Distribution Management Division. Plans, develops, coordinates, and controls directorate workload and funding requirements. This includes functions such as developing plans for the maximum utilization of facilities and manpower; monitoring the work measurement standards program; developing distribution center generated workload forecasts; and preparing methods of improvement studies for the directorate to include modernization plans.

(2) Receiving Division. This is where the distribution center cycle begins as the material is inducted into the distribution center operation. Material is received from a wide variety of sources to include manufacturers and customer returns. The material is offloaded, tallied in, and inspected when required. Finally, the material is forwarded to the Warehousing Division for storage.

(3) Warehousing Division. This operational area is divided into bin and bulk operations. These separate divisions are responsible for physically handling material at the distribution center. Functions include stowing receipts, stock selection, rewarehousing, care of supplies in storage (COSIS) set assembly and disassembly, and supporting the inventory management program. Developing and maintaining planographs in support of efficient utilization of storage space is another critical function.

(4) Inventory Integrity Division. This element is responsible for the distribution center inventory program. This includes performing

location surveys, location reconciliations, physical inventories, and inventory quality control programs; maintaining the custodial balance file; and coordinating research actions to resolve discrepancies in receipts and shipments. Overall, this division maintains surveillance on all functions that impact inventory reliability.

(5) Transportation and Shipping Division. Directs the traffic management and transportation elements of the distribution center pertaining to **obtaining commercial transportation** for the effective and efficient movement of supplies, equipment, and passengers. This includes functions such as **shipment planning**; providing internal rail services; maintaining liaison with commercial transportation carriers; and providing technical advice on all transportation matters.

8. Directorate Integration. The following scenario illustrates the requisition process for a repair part in support of a unique mission at a distribution center. This demonstrates how all distribution center directorates must work together to accomplish the distribution center mission.

a. The Warehousing Division is in need of a repair part for a unique assembly mission. A requisition is prepared and forwarded to the Distribution Center Operating Equipment Division to be processed through the Base Operation Supply System (BOSS). In addition, the Administrative Services Division is informed of the cost of the repair part since it controls the distribution center spending plan. The Distribution Center Operating Equipment Division reviews its distribution center inventory. If the repair part is in stock, it is issued to the assembly facility. If the materiel is not onhand, a requisition is forwarded to the Telecommunications Center to transmit the requisition to the ICP. Thereupon, the item manager initiates an MRO for shipment of the repair part to the distribution center.

b. The transportation company representative delivering the repair part arrives at the distribution center receiving gate. He is authorized access to the distribution center by security guard(s) from the Office of Public Safety. The security guard(s) direct the delivery truck to the Transportation and Shipping Division, Terminal Operations. Personnel from this office route the delivery truck to the appropriate receiving area. The Product Receiving and Evaluation Division personnel offload the repair part from the truck. Inspectors inspect the receipt for quality of materials and for accuracy of the receipt process. The repair part is then sent to the assembly facility using the internal transportation system provided by the Distribution Center Operating Equipment Division. The repair part is now available for use with the assembly project. This completes the process of providing repair part support to the distribution center assembly mission and clearly illustrates the interrelationships that exist between distribution center organizational elements.

9. Summary. This chapter focused on the organization, mission, and functions of a distribution center.

a. Effective and efficient management of distribution center operations depends on sound organizational structure and control. This is accomplished through the management process which includes Planning--the work to be done; Staffing--to accomplish the work; Organizing--the tasks and work flow; Directing--the work accomplishment; and Controlling--the results by measuring performance against planned standards. These organizational characteristics or management processes are incorporated in the current DLA Organization.

b. In addition, effective distribution center management depends upon the exchange and understanding of information between distribution center managers. Within the distribution center organization, understanding is facilitated by the establishment of clear

channels of communication. These channels are used to convey collective knowledge of the mission objectives, authority, priorities, and standards of performance. This channel of communication must be between superiors and subordinates; through mission support and mission elements; and across directorate lines. The design of the current distribution center

organization was developed with this factor playing a lead role.

c. Each organizational element through its assigned functions contributes to the effective and efficient accomplishment of the distribution center mission. This in turn contributes to the overall logistics goal of equipping and sustaining the soldier.

**OUTLINE FOR NOTETAKING
DISTRIBUTION CENTER ORGANIZATION, MISSION, AND FUNCTIONS**

I. Distribution center Mission.

II. Organization of the DoD Distribution Center System.

III. Environmental Influences on Distribution Center Decisions and Policies.

IV. Organization of the Distribution Center.

A. Command Level.

B. Mission Support Level.

1. Personal/Support Staff.

2. Office of Counsel.

3. Office of Distribution Administration.

4. Office of Distribution Financial Management.

5. Systems Management Division.

6. Public Safety Division.

7. Distribution Center Operating Equipment Division.

8. Facilities Engineering Division.

C. Mission Level.

V. Directorate Integration.

VI. Summary.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Which organization determines the mission of DLA distribution centers?
2. What are the four external environmental factors which impact on distribution center operations? Give examples of these factors.
3. Installation support and mission support is provided by central staff elements. Give several examples of installation and mission support elements.
4. What is the mission of the Office of Distribution Financial Management?
5. What is the mission of the Systems Management Division?
6. What is the mission of the Office of Counsel?
7. What is the mission of the Facility Engineering Division?
8. What is the mission of the Defense Distribution Center? Identify several functional areas.
9. Define the concept directorate integration. Provide one illustration.