



Homeland
Security

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



Medals and Awards Manual



COMDTINST M1650.25D
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LEGEND

- * Authority applies only when personnel or units are permanently or temporarily assigned to DoD units.
- ** Authority applies to Headquarters Office Chiefs and Service Directors at the O-6 and GS-15 levels, and Area & District O-6 Division Chiefs only.

Distinguishing Devices:

“O” Operational Distinguishing Device. For use on personal and unit awards. Each case must be carefully judged on its own merits, and the citation must specifically authorize the device. To qualify for this device on a personal award, both the person’s work and unit must be operational in nature. For example, an individual in a non-operational rating, specialty, or position assigned to an operational unit is not inherently or automatically eligible for the Operational Distinguishing Device on a personal award, though the member is not prohibited from receiving the Operational Distinguishing Device if the award is for operational achievements. Similarly, an individual in an operational rating, specialty, or position is not eligible for the device for duties performed at a non-operational unit (e.g., headquarters or district staff), or whenever the personal award only acknowledges administrative achievements. Personal awards earned while in a leave or liberty status for heroism may be considered eligible for the Operational Distinguishing Device. Eligibility criteria are based on a member’s or unit’s:

- direct participation in missions of an operational “hands on” nature (e.g., SAR, fire fighting, maritime law enforcement, disaster relief, pollution response, aids to navigation maintenance and operations); and/or
- extended periods of service (not for a specific incident) only if the majority of the citation used to justify the award is operational and not administrative, and the individual/unit participated “hands on” in the operational achievements.

“V” For Valor, Combat Distinguishing Device. The bronze letter “V” may be authorized for wear if the award is for acts or services involving direct participation in combat operations. Eligibility of decorations and distinguishing devices awarded for combat will be based upon acts or services by individuals who are exposed to direct hostile actions, or imminence of such actions, and not solely upon the geographical area in which the acts or services are performed. Each case must be judged on its own merits, and the citation must specifically authorize the device.