

An EPIC tool makes searching for logistics policy easy

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Thumbing through piles of Army policy to find the one paragraph you are looking for is a tedious job. But thanks to the work of the US Army Logistics Innovation Agency (LIA), your search just became a lot easier. LIA, the field-operating agency of Headquarters, Department of the Army for Logistics, G-4, created the Enterprise Policy and Process Interactive Capability - or EPIC - an electronic policy search tool that has remedied the archaic and cumbersome methods of searching and finding Army logistics policy.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

EPIC is designed to provide users with a similar look and feel as some of the more popular commercial search engines such as Google® or Yahoo®. Because EPIC looks and feels like these popular search engines, there is an easy transfer of knowledge from these commercial search engines to EPIC, making it a breeze to learn and to use. The similarities continue as EPIC provides two basic ways to perform searches: a simple word search and a complex phrase search.

EPIC provides users with the ability to research and cite official Army Regulations and Pamphlets as posted and updated by the Army Publication Directorate with unprecedented effectiveness. EPIC will return to the user a brief synopsis of results; then, the user can click on any part of the return to view the full document of requested information. So, what makes EPIC different from the commercial search engines?

THE EPIC DIFFERENCE

The first of the major differences is EPIC's ability to provide Army logisticians with precise results in finding Army logistics policy. Because EPIC searches only regulations from the Army G-4 and the Defense Transportation Regulation, search returns are timely, up-to-date, accurate, and precise. Additionally, EPIC provides the user with the exact data about their searches to help with policy analysis and ensure consistency between publications on the same topic. For instance, the search return will provide the user with (1) the owner of the regulation (Supply, Maintenance, Transportation/Distribution), (2) the regulation number and name, (3) the chapter name, and (4) a brief synopsis of the return results.

Using a method called "chunking," EPIC takes an entire regulation and breaks it down to the

paragraph level. By either performing a simple or advance search, EPIC users get the exact paragraph(s) associated with that topic search. In addition to performing precision searches, EPIC provides logisticians with cross-referenced searches. In other words, when a topic is queried, EPIC brings back all paragraphs relating to that topic no matter which discipline (Supply, Maintenance or Distribution/Transportation) is the primary proponent of that topic. This exclusive feature gives logisticians the ability to crosscheck policy ensuring that any existing or proposed changes do not contradict existing policy within a particular discipline or the entire Army logistics community.

FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

The current version of EPIC provides logisticians with search returns based on published G-4 regulations and the Defense Transportation Regulation. However, with the current operational tempo, policy is changing more frequently than in past. Unfortunately, with these frequent policy changes, the official process to update published regulations has been unable to keep up. As an interim solution, policy makers have started to use an interim message system to inform the Army on these fast pace policy changes called, All Army Activities Messages or ALARACTS. In the very near future, EPIC will incorporate the ability to search, retrieve, and associate ALARACTS into its database, making searching for the latest in logistics policy via ALARACTS as easy as it is from Army Regulations and Army Pamphlets. This addition will allow users to search all policy documents to include ALARACTS or to just search for logistics policy via ALARACTS alone.

WHERE TO FIND EPIC

EPIC is on the Internet and can be located at <http://epic.expr.net>. It is a free service to anyone who wants to use it. Currently, the tool is undergoing accreditation to be hosted on the DoD network. While EPIC will remain free to users after information certification, in the future, EPIC users will need to have either an Army Knowledge Online (AKO) account or a Common Access Card (CAC) authentication to gain access to the tool. Soldiers are encouraged to use the tool as much and often as needed and provide feedback through EPIC's "feedback" button for questions or suggestions.

About the author: Mr. Demetrius Glass serves as the EPIC project lead for the Logistics Innovation Agency. He has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Education from Newberry College, SC and a Masters of Art in Information Systems from George Washington University, Washington, DC. He is also a graduate of the United States Air Force and US Marine Corps Command & Staff Colleges and the Air Force's Air War College.