

DARKHELM CREW HANDLING MANUAL (CHM)

Volume III — Operating Philosophy & Technique

TERRAN NAVY · EARTH FEDERATION — Bureau of Ships

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Companion	Ship Operating Manual (TN-SOM-001) — the <i>what</i> ; this volume is the <i>how & why</i>

The SOM and QRH tell you **what** to do. This volume explains the **technique and philosophy** behind it — how a crew fights and flies the ship together. It is read, not actioned.

1. Philosophy

A warship is run by a **bridge crew**, each console owning one domain, under the **Command** station's direction. No one console wins or loses an engagement; the ship does, through coordination. The guiding ideas:

- **Power is finite and shared.** Every capability — shields, weapons, sensors, drives — is a draw on the same buses. Engineering's allocation decides what the ship can do at any moment; the rest of the crew flies and fights within that budget. Ask for power before you need it, not when you are already short.
- **Fly the ship first.** Attitude, heading and energy come before everything else. A ship that cannot manoeuvre cannot defend itself.
- **Let the ESMS run the abnormal.** When a fault annunciates, work its **drill** to STATUS, then review what is inoperative. Do not improvise around a sensed fault — the drill is the agreed recovery.
- **Talk.** The crew shares one ship over the intercom. Call your intentions, your contacts, and your problems out loud. Silence loses ships.

2. The Golden Rules

1. **Aviate, navigate, communicate.** Keep control of the ship, know where you are and where you are going, then coordinate — in that order, always.

2. **Power before posture.** Confirm the power and cooling to support an action before you commit to it (shields, a high hyperspace factor, a weapons-heavy engagement).
3. **One fault at a time.** Work the highest-priority ESMS drill to STATUS before chasing the next. The system sorts them into the order the crew should work them.
4. **Protect the critical bus.** Life support and consoles live on the emergency bus. Never trade it away — it is the one bus you keep alive at all costs.
5. **Cool what you run.** Heat is the silent killer. Every reactor and weapon produces it; confirm the loops are clearing it, especially under sustained load or at high hyperspace factor.
6. **Confirm the course is clear before you jump — and before you revert.** Reverting from hyperspace inside a body is fatal.
7. **Shields toward the threat.** Manage the six facings; never present a collapsed arc to an enemy.
8. **Authorise, then act.** Weapons release — and nuclear release in particular — follows the alert state and the required authority. Arm deliberately, safe deliberately.

3. Crew coordination by station

- **Command** sets the alert state and the engagement intent, and holds release authority. It does not fly or shoot — it decides.
- **Helm** owns attitude, heading, throttle and the jump. It calls the ship's energy state and keeps the threatened facing toward the enemy.
- **Engineering** owns the power and cooling budget. It pre-allocates for the expected posture (cruise, battle, jump) and calls brown-out risk before it bites.
- **Weapons** owns locks, fire and point-defence. It calls inbound missiles and requests the power it needs.
- **Sensors** owns the picture — detection, classification, painting and the datalink. It calls new contacts and threat changes first.
- **Comms** owns hailing, channels, subspace and IFF. It verifies contacts and runs station services.

4. Handling the alert states

- **Condition Green** — cruise. Power trimmed for endurance; shields down or low; weapons safe.
- **Level 2 Battle Stations** — a threat is possible. **Raise shields**, man all stations, bring fire control to standby, and have Engineering shift toward a combat allocation.
- **Level 1 Battle Stations** — a hostile is confirmed. **Weapons up and shields up**, combat power, damage control manned. Fight the ship.
- **Stand down** — threat resolved. Safe weapons, return the alert to green, and trim power back to cruise.

5. Engineering technique

- Run **AUTO BALANCE** in normal operations; take manual control for a start, a deliberate shed, or a fault.

- Pre-stage power for what is coming: shields and weapons before a fight, the hyperdrive before a jump.
- When transferring a bus from shore to ship power, **tie the reactor and bring its output up to carry the load before dropping shore power** — transferring to a cold source trips the bus.
- Watch coolant temperature, not just system heat: a hot loop throttles its own pumps and the systems then climb with it.

6. Combat technique

- Win the **sensor** fight first: detect and classify before you are detected, paint for your missiles, and share the picture on the datalink.
- Keep an intact facing to the threat and rotate damage off a depleting arc.
- Manage **point-defence and countermeasures** against missiles — do not rely on shields alone.
- Treat heat and power as part of the engagement: a ship that overheats its weapons or browns out its shields has lost the fight to its own plant.