

## Group Commander Roles and Responsibilities

**Lesson Objective:** Overview of Group commander responsibility, authority, and resources for more in-depth explanations.

**Desired Learning Outcomes (DLO):**

1. Identify command responsibilities from CAPR 30-1, 13 January 2020
2. Understand Command Presence and communication with your subordinate units
3. Evaluate options for Organizational Chart and Staff
4. Be aware of command specialty track requirements from CAPP 222, April 2013
5. Know how to work the SUI worksheets

**Scheduled Lesson Time: 20 minutes**

### Introduction

Serving as a Group commander is an important role in Civil Air Patrol (CAP) that involves a lot of people skills to include communication. The primary success of CAP's missions' results from informed unit leadership providing thousands of volunteers with opportunities to contribute efforts every week. There are a variety of group command structures, with a common responsibility to pass communication effectively and efficiently between wing and squadrons.

### 1. Identify command responsibilities from CAPR 30-1, 13 January 2020

At this level of command, you are introduced to a variety of regulations which offer guidance for Group command authority and responsibility. You are encouraged to review them, so the knowledge is available to you during expected and unexpected moments of need. The wing commanders has the option to form groups when the geographical area, structure, or the number of units is too large to permit the wing commander to exercise effective supervision directly over squadrons and flights. The variations in group structures and purposes are described below.

In paragraph 7.3, "The group echelon exists to improve the wing's mission effectiveness, and wing commanders have authority to specify the purpose and structure of the group. Group headquarters units may be structured similar to a squadron or may have a more limited structure to provide the wing commander the most flexibility. The wing commander will identify the purpose of the group in the wing's organizational chart, including the staff positions authorized for that group headquarters. A Group should have a minimum of five squadrons under its control unless the Wing Commander determined otherwise due to geography, demographics, or functional structure. Both CAP/DP and Region Commander will be notified of any change in group structures."

Within their groups the commander is expected to:

**Exercise command** with inherent authority to accomplish responsibilities from the wing commander as set out in corporation objectives, policies, and directives.

- Know where to find information about the Civil Air Patrol Constitution and Bylaws, governing directives and policy matters affecting your command

**Be aware of accomplishments, problems, and degree of compliance** by subordinate units with requirements through a system of inspections, reports, and regular staff visits. Keep the wing commander from being surprised by actions in the units, through updates of notable accomplishments and problem areas in the three key areas are money, people, and stuff.

**Refer problems** that cannot be resolved at group level to the wing commander.

**Select high caliber staff members** and remove from group staff positions those members deemed unsuitable to continue in their positions. If there is a deputy, the group commander should develop a position description outlining his/her specific duties and responsibilities.

**Coordinate with the Wing Commander** on identification of high caliber commanders for subordinate units before scheduled replacements are assigned, as well as removal of unit commanders whenever they are considered unsuitable.

One of the most essential elements of command is the understanding: a commander can delegate authority but not responsibility. Authority refers to who is in charge while responsibility refers to who is accountable. Although much of authority is spelled out, commanders are expected to use judgment and do what is right even if there is no specific directive. The idea of accountability leads a capable commander to develop subordinates, stay involved, and manage risk while taking responsibility.

## **2. Understand Command Presence**

As soon as the actual change of command ceremony is completed, you become the visible leader of the Group. Your actions and words are viewed as the example, so you need to be present and act with integrity at your units and in the community. Command is an experience that is challenging yet rewarding. Having a Commander's Intent developed and available for discussion with members of your group helps everyone focus on what you wish to accomplish. If you need a review, this is discussed in the Unit Commanders Course (UCC).

As you think about successful commanders and leaders you have admired, they probably possess Command Presence which is a positive perception as an authority in a professional sense. The vast majority of time, command presence is expressed as non-verbal communication that is transmitted through your first interactions. Just like a squadron commander, your posture and personal presentation, how you walk, speak and the gestures you use all project "Command Presence." While people may not always like your message, your "command presence" provides most with willingness to follow your ideas.

You are the next step in the Chain of Command if members or family do not like the decision of a squadron commander. Most personnel will not contact wing directly. This is a key element of your position, to act at the lowest possible command level to resolve conflict before it escalates. Don't be afraid to ask for help and take advantage of coaching by more experienced officers. If you are asked by squadron commander to assist with a member's concern or if you are tasked by wing commander to assist, you need to ensure a clear understanding of your command role. Some issues can be resolved by helping all members reach a common understanding. Others

involve talking to wing legal and a review of CAPP 10-1, 2 Mar 2020, Commander Directed Investigation (CDI). CDIs are internal, administrative investigations used to gather, analyze, and record relevant information of interest to the commander. They are extensions of the commander's authority to investigate and to correct problems within his or her command. Once you have arrived at a decision, often with the guidance from wing, be firm in your presentation, and delivery of the decision, even if it is not necessarily the answer the other party wants to hear. Remember, we are a volunteer organization, so you need to offer why the decision was made. Many times, a clear explanation can avoid the member filing a complaint with the wing IG.

### **3. Organizational Chart and Staff**

The Group Organizational chart in CAPR 30-1, para 8, Figure 7 and 8 offer a fully staffed example. Your group charter from wing commander may set up a different pattern when your responsibilities are defined. In every situation, your current organizational graphic with names and functions is a great way to share whom to contact when they have a question. It is quite vital that the officers in charge of those functional areas have routine meetings, either face to face or teleconferences, with email follow ups for squadron personnel in their functional area to answer questions and check understanding of information sent by email or posted on websites at wing, region or NHQ. Again, emails do not replace the personal contact with squadron members essential to knowing their concerns, tasks, and even brilliant ideas.

### **4. Be aware of command track requirements from CAPP 222, Apr 13**

Once selected as a Group commander, typically the vice wing or wing commander will enter you into the command specialty track and assign a mentor, if you haven't been entered in as a squadron commander. Similar to other specialty tracks you may hold, it has knowledge, training, and performance requirements to work toward your technician or senior rating. It can happen that focus on your specialty track work gets lost in busy events, it is a good idea to periodically review actions with your mentor to ensure documentation occurs in a timely period. [CAPP 222 17 Apr 13](#)

### **5. Know how to work the Subordinate Unit Inspection (SUI) worksheets**

SUIs are conducted every two years for your squadrons. Also, possibly for your group in accordance with CAPR 20-3, 9.4, "Units such as flights, school squadrons, and groups may have different structures and therefore may operate in a manner that varies. WG/CCs, in consultation with their region commander, will determine which tabs are inspected for these units, as needed"

SUIs are limited in scope as not all directive language in regulations, such as "will, shall, or must" are inspected by the Wing Inspector General (IG) team. Having access to subject matter experts for the questions and particularly documentation, is vital to help squadron commanders understand compliance and timely document upload. One of the best ways to increase squadron and group knowledge of this process is to volunteer as an augmentee to the SUI team. Regulations are often updated every few years, so it is critical to identify current inspection worksheets at IG portion of national website. The Wing IG may be able to answer questions about the SUI if you ask before the unit's 60-day inspection window.

## **6. Mitchell Award Ceremony**

This is one of the most important promotions, other than the Spaatz award, in the Cadet program, so the ceremony needs to demonstrate that importance. A simple handoff of the certificate and insignia is a great disservice to the cadet that has worked to earn this prestigious milestone award. CAPR

60-1, 1 Nov 19, recommends the unit commander invite the group commander to participate. You can develop your own program or there are samples in the cadet program materials.

## **Lesson Summary and Closure**

You have explored formal authority and responsibilities of Group command. Communication is the key to being a successful Group Commander. Squadrons want to hear from you, but they do not want you to run their squadron, and you shouldn't. Group command can be a fun and fulfilling position!