

The Roles and Responsibilities of the Squadron/Flight Commander

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

Desired Learning Outcomes (DLO):

1. Identify command responsibilities from CAPR 20-1 (I), March 2013
2. Understand Command Presence and “Just In Time” guidance from CAPP 40-2, December 2018
3. Be aware of command specialty track requirements from CAPP 222, April 2013
4. Recognize where to locate SUI worksheets

Scheduled Lesson Time: 30 minutes

Introduction

Serving as a squadron commander is one of the most rewarding and also most important roles in Civil Air Patrol (CAP). The primary success of CAP's missions result from informed unit leadership providing thousands of volunteers with opportunities to contribute efforts every week. Their time and talents strengthen our cadet programs, aerospace education, and emergency services missions.

1. Identify command responsibilities from CAPR 20-1 (I), 2 Mar 2013, with ICL

A starting point for formal definition of squadron command authority and responsibility is CAPR 20-1(I), 2 Jan 13 ICL, Organization of Civil Air Patrol. Squadron commanders are responsible to the corporation and to the wing commander (or group commander if applicable) for ensuring that the corporation objectives, policies, and operational directives are effectively executed within their squadron. The sentences in the position description provide a broad picture of the duties. These items may lead to a question, what does your group and/or wing commander expect from you?

Establish plans, policies, and procedures necessary to the fulfillment of the CAP mission, which are not in conflict with the directives of higher headquarters.

Keep informed of the **accomplishments, problems, and degree of compliance** with regulations and other directives through personal observations, inspections, reports, and staff meetings.

Comply with all policies, regulations, and directives of higher headquarters and require the same compliance by all members of the squadron.

Ensure **safety of personnel and equipment** through compliance with directives and policy guidance; ensure an effective safety awareness, education, and

inspection program within the unit.

Select personnel to **fill authorized staff positions and remove from staff position** those members deemed unqualified or otherwise unsuitable to continue in their positions.

Establish policies and procedures to ensure an **effective squadron recruiting and retention** program.

Coordinate the activities of staff officers to **prevent overlapping of functions** and to resolve conflicts.

Eliminate members whose continued membership is **determined undesirable** in accordance with the provisions of **CAPR 35-3**.

Identify members for nonrenewal where continued membership is adverse to the best interests of CAP in accordance with provisions of **CAPR 39-2**.

Determine **meeting dates and attendance requirements** for squadron meetings in accordance with policies established by higher headquarters.

Ensure that **new personnel are properly introduced to CAP** and make frequent checks on their progress.

Ensure that **squadron property and funds** are properly safeguarded and **accounted** for.

Initiate **requests for promotion** of squadron members.

Ensure **proper wear of the uniform** and that violations are promptly corrected.

Ensure that **complaints and grievances** are resolved fairly, impartially, and promptly.

Initiate **recommendations for awards and decorations** for squadron members.

Initiate **organization actions** affecting their squadron (charter redesignations, address changes, etc.).

Refer to the next higher headquarters **problems that cannot be resolved** at squadron level.

Promote an understanding and **appreciation of CAP in the local community**.

Promote **aerospace education**.

-- Squadron commanders should be familiar with the Civil Air Patrol Constitution and Bylaws, CAP governing directives, and all policy matters affecting their command.

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 and “Just In Time” guidance from CAPP 40-2, Dec 18

As soon as the actual change of command ceremony is completed, you become the visible leader of the unit. Your actions and words are viewed as the example, so you need to be present and act with integrity at your unit and in the community. Command is an experience that is challenging yet rewarding. It is interesting to recall that when people talk of history, they often remember leaders more than actions. Alexander, not Macedonia conquered the ancient world and Napoleon, not France, won the Battle of Austerlitz which lead to collapse of Holy Roman Empire. Do not be surprised when you are asked about your vision for squadron direction. Others have noted “everyone lives under the same sky, yet not all have the same horizon.” Your vision will help drive the people you connect to and the energy you create within your squadron as well as outside.

As you think about successful commanders and leaders you have admired, they may possess Command Presence which is 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. 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. Developing these traits is part of life-long learning experiences so take advantage of coaching and mentoring

This pamphlet, Civil Air Patrol Just in Time, A Workbook for New Unit Commanders recognizes not all are able to immediately take the Unit Commanders Course. This guide is intended to focus efforts on first two to three months. It is an initial tool to help you ask important questions in all key areas and collect the answers in one spot as you start down a path that is typically four years. The first few pages of this workbook are for adding names and numbers, inside your squadron to build a support network. When a challenge arises, you will be armed with a list of experts to help you succeed. You will also want to find opportunities to talk with other squadron commanders then add to the list.

A squadron organization chart is a great graphic to display names of deputy commanders and staff officers that are key to keeping you informed about what is going on in their functional areas. The first few pages about duty positions are major activity areas within a squadron to include operations, cadet programs, logistics (supply and transportation) plus finance. These all are part of a common saying about what gets commanders in trouble, “money, people. & stuff.” Ask your staff officers to help you answer questions, which will include looking in the a wide variety of functional regulations to find requirements and report deadlines. This vital part of your first 60 to 90 days gives you a better idea of how well your staff understand and are completing their duties. [CAPP 40-2 Dec 18](#)

3. Be aware of command track requirements from CAPP 222, Apr 13

Once selected as a squadron commander, typically the vice wing or wing commander will enter you into the command specialty track and assign a mentor. Similar to other specialty tracks you may hold, it has knowledge, training, and performance requirements to work toward your technician rating. Pursuing the Unit Commander’s Course and Training Leaders of Cadets course as early as available will provide you with quite a bit of practical information on success as a commander, as well as help you avoid burnout from trying to do many squadron duties yourself. During this process the mentor/trainee relationship is not a command relationship. It’s a teaching relationship where the mentor helps focus the trainee’s personal growth through a series of interactions. 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](#)

4. Recognize where to locate Subordinate Unit Inspection (SUI) worksheets

After you have completed many of the pages in the Just In Time Workbook along with your staff, now is a good time to discuss formal inspection requirements. SUIs are conducted every two years, yet they are limited in scope as not all requirements in regulations will be inspected by team from Wing inspector general (IG). The best time to start preparing for a SUI is within your first 60- 90 days of command. This gives you time to learn from subject matter experts about the questions and at least as importantly, check if your documentation is up to date to verify requirements have been met. Since regulations may be updated every few years it is critical to review most up to date set of inspection questions at IG portion of national website [SUI Worksheets](#)

Wing IG offices will answer questions about date and process of the SUI. Some may have staff and time to offer prep assistance if you are not close to the 60 day inspection window.

Lesson Summary and Closure

You have explored the formal authority and responsibilities of squadron command. Ideas on how to succeed as a squadron commander could fill the sky from virtually the east to the west coast. Starting with the basics from three sources described above,

talk with other commanders about best practices and use your experiences to build squadron success with help of dedicated staff officers.