



CAP Safety Beacon

June 2021

The Safety Beacon is for informational purposes. Unit Safety Officers are encouraged to use the articles in the Beacon as topics for their monthly safety briefings and discussions. Members may go to [eservices Learning Management System](#), click on “Go to AXIS,” search for this month’s Safety Beacon, take the quiz, and receive safety education credit.

Culture and Safety

CAP Regulation 160-1 states:

“A strong risk-management-based safety culture provides a foundation for the success of the Civil Air Patrol Safety Management System and requires an informed and involved membership.”

The four safety culture attributes emphasized in [CAP’s SMS](#) (Chapter 1, Section 1.5) are *reporting culture, just culture, learning culture, and flexible culture*. But what makes culture an important component of a successful SMS?

Bottom line: Safety culture is an idea many know but do not fully understand. Without a collective understanding and commitment to act congruently with our safety principles, we risk placing people and resources in harm’s way – even if it is unintentional.

Principles-Based Safety

Safety is about more than rules.

In the regulation cited above where safety culture is described, we use words like accountability, fairness, confidence, trust, cooperation, lessons-learned, improvement, encouragement, commitment, responsibility, willingness, and reinforcement, among others. Those words represent the foundation of our safety management system. They

are also open to subjective interpretation, and without common ground from which to operate, alignment in practice is hard to achieve.

Here are a few principles to consider:

- **Flexibility** – the capability to adapt effectively when faced with change. We face unknowns every day, and situations can shift without notice, but when we can “bend without breaking,” we work to overcome barriers and obstacles to safe outcomes in ever-changing conditions. In terms of risk management, no matter how prepared we think we are, things can still go wrong. People in organizations that have highly reliable safety practices are always on the lookout for what can go wrong and work proactively to mitigate risks before a negative outcome occurs. The flexibility principle can be tied to CAP’s core value of EXCELLENCE where we hold ourselves to a high standard to protect our people and resources.
 - **Learning** – more than just the acquisition of knowledge, true learning takes place when knowledge becomes a change in behavior – when we know better, we do better. Learning is an act of taking personal responsibility to seek to be better than we were yesterday. The learning principle can be tied to CAP’s core value of INTEGRITY where we not only do the right things, but we personally own the fact that none of us can know everything. When we make an error, acknowledge it, discuss it with others, and work to learn from it – to change our behavior. In doing so, we will make more progress in preventing negative safety outcomes.
 - **Fairness** - impartial and just treatment or behavior without favoritism or discrimination. We all make mistakes – humans are complex, and the factors that lead us to err are a complicated mix of emotion, experience, and day-to-day wear and tear. Impartial and just treatment is also not devoid of compassion. When we make mistakes, we need to avoid defaulting to blame, which will impede learning. In combining fairness and compassion, we accept that everyone is susceptible to an honest error and, when treated fairly and compassionately, open to learning and change. Fairness can be tied to CAP’s core value of RESPECT where we listen openly to others and “seek to understand before being understood.”
 - **Accountability** – a willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one’s actions. Having compassion for others is not a reason to ignore accountability. When someone does not accept responsibility for being accountable, then “holding” accountable may be necessary – however, this is not the ideal in an effective safety culture. Striving to model personal accountability is the responsibility of all leaders across CAP. The accountability principles can be tied to CAP’s core value of VOLUNTEER SERVICE where “service before self” means that accepting responsibility means that I am not only willing to account publicly for my contribution to safety errors, but also to be held to account by others when they observe a deviation that could cause harm.
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Mind your mental health! Eat and sleep well. Connect with others. Take a break from social media. Get moving. Breathe deeply and remember to relax. Know when you need help.

Tripping Hazards Awareness

In 2019, more than 8 million people were treated for fall-related injuries, making falls the number one cause of [preventable nonfatal injuries](#) and number two in causes of preventable fatalities (poisoning was number one).

Falls account for 32% of all preventable, nonfatal injuries.

The Hazards

Slips, trips, and falls are preventable! Here are a few hazards to watch for:

- Cluttered areas
- Cords, tools, or materials in walking areas
- Poor visibility, poor lighting
- Carrying something you can't see over
- Running, walking too fast
- Spills
- Wet walking surfaces
- Open drawers
- Uneven walking surfaces
- Not using handrails on stairs
- Inappropriate footwear
- Not enough caution on ladders

The Mitigations

- Good housekeeping – keep things cleaned up - put away tools, cords, materials, close drawers, etc. after use

- Report tripping hazards – torn carpet, loose tiles, poor lighting etc. – get these fixed as soon as possible, and alert people with signage for tripping hazards
- Walk slowly when carrying a load – watch where you are going and slow down!
- Keep walking areas clear – never place anything on stairways,
- Clean up spills immediately – put up signs or barriers to warn people of wet floors
- Wear the right footwear – non-skid soles, and wipe feet when coming inside on rainy, snowy days
- Use caution on ladders – stability is key, do not overextend (yourself or the ladder), pay attention to the warning labels

Biases in Risk Assessment (part 2)

“He wanted AFFIRMATION rather than INFORMATION.”

– Barbara W. Tuchman, in **The March of Folly**

No such thing as certainty

Risk is a study in probability, not certainty. Whether or not an unsafe condition will exist is expressed in terms of its likelihood and, like the weather, many variables influence the outcome.

Bottom line: Risk management is anything but simple.

Factors affecting severity (or expected consequence)

We often think of consequence in terms of damage, illness, or injury. While these consequences are certainly undesirable, when they happen, they add up to “costs” – and not always in terms of dollars. Some cost examples include:

- Member incapacitation – the cost to a member, their family, and/or CAP when a member is injured or becomes ill and cannot participate
- Operational/Service impairment – the cost of not meeting an operational or service commitment
- Credibility or reputation loss – the cost of losing the public trust or the confidence of our partners and members

The above cost examples represent a few potential consequences if a negative safety outcome in the form of damage, injury, or illness were to occur.

What to do: Ask yourself, “What could go wrong? What will happen if it does go wrong?” and make a list. Engage others in the process, especially those with expertise and experience in the activity, to decide what the consequence and its severity could be.

Factors affecting likelihood

Likelihood tends to be harder to determine. How do you know how likely a particular thing is to happen?

It's not a simple matter of how often something has happened in the past, it's also a matter of the potential a particular hazard has for causing a consequence. One example of looking at likelihood is with heat-related illnesses. These illnesses are influenced by several factors: temperature, humidity, air flow, workload, medications, medical conditions, clothing type, and many more. The more of these influences converge, the more likely the experience of a heat-related illness.

One thing to keep in mind: humans tend to underperform on accuracy when it comes to [predicting outcomes](#), but there are ways to improve the odds. Here are just a few:

- **Make it a team sport** – involve others in the process of determining how likely something is to happen. By incorporating a variety of perspectives along with their rationale, you improve the potential for completeness and accuracy.
- **Slow down and keep an open mind** – rushing or defaulting to oversimplified rationale reduces accuracy and can lead to missed mitigation opportunities. Take the time to think through each hazard and how likely it could be to create a consequence.
- **Revise as needed** – do a “first draft” that you come back to later and revise. This simple act of stepping away can often impact your perspective as the brain processes the information.

What to do: Think about more than just whether something has happened in the past. Also think about all the factors that could converge and would increase the likelihood of something happening.

Looking for an opportunity to make a difference in CAPSafety?

CAPSafety is looking for volunteers to join the National Safety Staff! If you have a passion for safety and want to help us improve the program, check out the opportunities [here](#):

[Volunteer National Staff Vacancies | Civil Air Patrol National Headquarters
\(gocivilairpatrol.com\)](http://gocivilairpatrol.com)