CIVIL AIR PATROL
U.S. AIR FORCE AUXILIARY

The Dispatch

Safety | Health Services | Chaplain Corps



Photo Credit: WYWG Operations

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November Theme:

The Dispatch features articles focused on this month's theme, "Adaptable With Purpose", with contributions from Safety, Health Services, and the Chaplain Corps. In Civil Air Patrol, remaining flexible when conditions change without losing sight of standards, people or mission priorities is essential to effective service.

Primary Articles

SAFETY
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CHAPLAIN CORPS
Adaptable with a Purpose: Staying Grounded During Change

The Dispatch is for informational CAP purposes. Unit Safety Officers, Health Service Officers, and Chaplains are encouraged to use articles from The Dispatch as topics for monthly safety briefings and discussions. Members can earn safety education credit by completing this month's quiz in the Absorb Learning Management System (LMS) through eServices. Access the quiz using the provided link here, or by logging in to eServices, selecting Menu, Online Learning, and Absorb LMS. From the dashboard, open the Catalog, browse the Safety category, and locate this month's The Dispatch course. For quicker access, sort the results by Newest First.

SAFETY

When the Plan Needs to Change: Adaptability in the Cockpit

By: Lt. Col. Rafael Salort, SER-FL-001, National Safety Team

Every flight begins with a plan. We check weather, calculate fuel, review NOTAMs, assess aircraft performance, brief the mission, and identify hazards. But no matter how thorough the planning, conditions can change.

Weather deteriorates. Winds increase. A runway closes. A discrepancy appears during preflight. The mission takes longer than expected. Fuel reserves shrink. A crewmember becomes fatigued or uncomfortable.

Good aviators recognize when the original plan no longer fits the conditions and adjust before their options disappear.

The challenge is recognizing change early. Aviation risk often develops gradually. The ceiling drops a little.

Headwinds increase. The mission runs longer. Fatigue builds. Fuel consumption is higher than expected. Individually, each may seem manageable. Together, they



Photo Credit: CAP.News Operations

"Adaptability does not mean relaxing standards."

can create a situation very different from the one originally evaluated.

Throughout the flight, ask: What has changed? Are our original assumptions still valid? Are several small risks beginning to accumulate?

Every crewmember has a role in answering those questions. If something does not look or feel right, speak up.

Effective crew resource management depends on sharing information while there is still time to act.

Adaptability does not mean relaxing standards. There is an important difference between changing the plan and changing the standards. Standards remain the guardrails; the plan is what we adjust within them.

Plan carefully. Monitor continuously. Speak up early. Preserve options. And when conditions change, be willing to change the plan.

Sometimes the safest mission decision is simply choosing a different one.

HEALTH SERVICES

Flu-Ready and Resilient This Season



Photo Credit: NCR 2025 Wreaths Across America

By: Lt. Col. Jason Quick, SWR-TX-388, Health Services Leadership Team and Maj. Gerry Creager, SWR-SWR-001, Health Services

Adaptability with purpose means recognizing changing conditions and making thoughtful adjustments that keep people and missions moving forward. Few things test that ability like a respiratory virus sweeping through the ranks right before a big weekend of flying or ground team training. The 2026–2027 influenza season is already underway, and getting ahead of it is one of the simplest ways to keep our members healthy and our missions on track.

What we're seeing right now. Every flu season is different, but this one is off to an unusually early start, with the share of tests coming back positive for flu running higher than is typical for this time of year — especially along the West Coast (Lenharo, Nature, 2026). Clinicians in other parts of the country, including Colorado and Texas, are also reporting a higher-than-usual number of influenza-like illnesses this early. Most of the early U.S. cases are influenza A (H1N1), a switch from last year's H3N2-dominated season (Lenharo, Nature, 2026). It's still too early to know how severe the season will become, and an early start doesn't automatically mean a worse season — but it's a clear signal to get ahead of it now. The season as a whole is nothing to shrug off: the CDC estimates that influenza caused 15 to 25 million medical visits, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations, and at least 24,000 deaths last season, hitting adults 65 and older and people with chronic conditions hardest (Senerth et al., JAMA, 2026).

How the flu gets around. Influenza spreads mainly through the air — in the droplets and fine particles an infected person puts out when they cough, sneeze, talk, or even breathe (Neumann et al., Nature Reviews Disease Primers, 2026). It can also spread when someone touches a contaminated surface — a "fomite" like a desk, yoke, radio, or door handle — and then touches their nose, eyes, or mouth. This surface route is a recognized way the virus moves around, though researchers consider it a smaller contributor than airborne spread, partly because the virus survives only a few minutes on hands (Uyeki et al., Lancet, 2022; Qualls et al., CDC, 2017).

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Here's the tricky part: most people become contagious about a day before symptoms appear and can keep spreading the virus for roughly five to seven days after they feel sick (Qualls et al., CDC, 2017). In other words, the member who seems perfectly fine at this week's meeting may not know they're already sharing more than good conversation.

Your best defense. Staying current on your annual flu vaccine remains the single most effective step. The nation's major medical societies — including the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists — all recommend annual vaccination for everyone 6 months and older who doesn't have a medical reason to skip it, including people who are pregnant (Sur and Khoo, American Family Physician, 2026; AAP Committee on Infectious Diseases, Pediatrics, 2026).



Photo Credit: MIWG Encampment Day 7 - 4 July 2025

Simple habits that add up:

- **If you're sick, stay home.** Your body is fighting a viral infection and needs rest to recover. Just as important, make it clear that members who stay home to get well are doing the right thing — not letting the team down.
- **Wipe down shared surfaces.** Clean the desks, controls, radios, and door handles that many hands touch throughout a meeting or mission.
- **Wash your hands often.** Good hand hygiene matters year-round, but it's especially powerful during flu season for interrupting that surface-to-face route of infection (Srivastav et al., PLoS One, 2018).

None of these steps are complicated, and that's the point. Layered together — vaccination, staying home when ill, cleaning surfaces, and handwashing — they meaningfully slow the spread and keep more of us mission-ready (Rosero et al., Drugs & Aging, 2025). Resilient units aren't the ones that never get sick; they're the ones that plan ahead, look out for each other, and keep flying.

"Here's the tricky part: most people become contagious about a day before symptoms appear and can keep spreading the virus for roughly five to seven days after they feel sick."

CHAPLAIN CORPS

Adaptable with a Purpose: Staying Grounded During Change



Photo Credit: CAP 2026 OH Encampment

"Schedules, locations, methods, or activities may change, but our purpose remains constant."

By: Ch., Lt. Col. Leslie D. Fife, RMR-UT-080, RMR Director of Safety

Change is a normal part of Civil Air Patrol. Weather shifts, equipment becomes unavailable, mission requirements evolve, and health or safety concerns may require immediate adjustments. For Safety Officers and Health Services Officers, being adaptable with a purpose means responding effectively to changing circumstances without losing sight of our mission.

Adaptability, however, requires something steady beneath it. This connects directly with the Chaplain Corps theme of "Staying Grounded During Change." For Safety Officers and HSOs, staying grounded means relying on sound risk management, situational awareness, professional judge-ment, established procedures, and a continuing commitment to member well-being.

A Safety Officer may recognize that changing weather, fatigue, or an emerging hazard requires modifying or stopping an activity. An HSO may identify heat stress, dehydration, illness, or another concern requiring changes to training. Adjusting the plan is not a failure to accomplish the mission. It is a deliberate decision that protects our people and preserves mission cap-ability.

The Chaplain Corps complements Safety and Health Services by helping members maintain perspective, resilience, and focus during uncertainty and challenges. Together, Chaplains, Safety Officers, and HSOs help members remain grounded in CAP's values and purpose while responding thoughtfully change.

Across CAP, Safety Officers and HSOs can model this balance. We anticipate hazards, assess changing conditions, communicate concerns, and help commanders make informed decisions. Schedules, locations, methods, or activities may change, but our purpose remains constant.

Being adaptable with a purpose means knowing what can change while remaining grounded in what should not: protecting our people, managing risk, preserving readiness, and enabling CAP to accomplish its missions safely and effectively.

When the Road Loses Its Grip: Coefficient of Friction and Winter Driving

by: Maj. Rick Louys, GLR-MI-001 Director of Safety & Assistant Chief of Staff, GLR-MI-700 Group Deputy Commander

Winter driving risk can be explained by a simple concept: coefficient of friction. It describes how much grip exists between two surfaces—in this case, your tires and the road.

On dry pavement, a typical tire may have a coefficient of friction around 0.7–0.9. That friction allows the vehicle to accelerate, turn, and stop effectively. Snow reduces available friction considerably, and ice can reduce it dramatically. Depending on temperature and conditions, the coefficient of friction on ice may fall to approximately 0.1 or even lower.

Why does this matter?

Stopping distance is inversely related to available friction. If the coefficient of friction drops from about 0.8 on dry pavement to 0.1 on ice, the friction-limited portion of your stopping distance can become roughly **eight times longer** at the same speed.

Speed compounds the problem. Braking distance increases approximately with the **square of vehicle speed.** Doubling your speed can require roughly four times the braking distance— even before accounting for ice.

This also explains why four-wheel drive is not four-wheel stop. AWD and 4WD can help a vehicle accelerate, but they cannot create additional tire-to-road friction when braking or turning.



Photo Credit: CAP.News Operations

For CAP members traveling to winter activities, the lesson is straightforward: **slow down before conditions demand it, increase following distance substantially, and make steering, braking, and acceleration inputs smoothly.**

The safest winter-driving technique is not recovering from a skid. It is preserving enough available friction that the skid never begins.

National Safety Officer College Continues Strong Momentum

CAP NSOC, the organization's premier advanced safety education program, is currently underway with an outstanding Fall 2026 cohort of safety professionals from across the country. As part of NSOC's continued evolution, the program is being refined into a meaningful capstone experience for current and aspiring safety leaders. NSOC aims to provide graduates with tools and perspectives that create lasting value for both the individual member and the organization as a whole. The next NSOC offering will begin on **January 10, 2027**. Enrollment for upcoming offerings will be prioritized for members currently awaiting attendance through previously approved NSOC waivers, as well as those serving in safety-related duty positions whose eligibility and compliance require the training. Learn more about NSOC and monitor the schedule online.

Working in Wildland Areas

By: Capt. Paul Anderson, Jr., SER-FL-001, FLWG Asst. Director of Safety



Photo Credit: Pensacola Cadet Squadron SER-FL-425, 2025

There are normally many dangers in wildland areas. These hazards include Snags, Widow Makers, Windfall, and Hangups. These hazards can be more profound in areas where wildland fires have occurred.

Snags are dead, standing trees, typically without leaves or needles in the crown. They can be caused by fires burning through the duff, damaging the root systems and destroying the ground cover that may help to support the tree. They typically have much lower fuel moisture than live, green trees. They are subject to rot and can fall unexpectedly or even due to a slight breeze if the root systems are severely damaged.

"The key to remaining safe in a wildland area is constant situational awareness."

Widow Makers are loose limbs or tops of trees that are lodged in the tree, supported by other limbs. Be aware of Widow Makers, preferably walking around them rather than under them. Maintain awareness of the wind strength when working near them. They may fall on anyone walking or working beneath them without warning.



Photo Credit: PublicDomainPictures

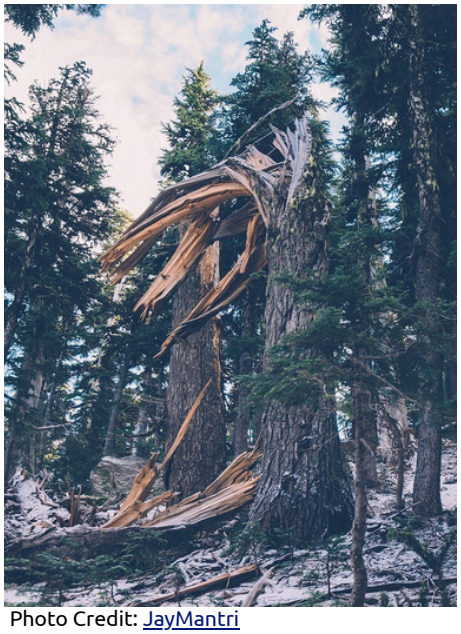


Photo Credit: JayMantri

Windfall (or Windthrow) are trees that have been broken off or uprooted by strong wind. These create ground hazards. If one that has been broken off mid-trunk has been rotting for a lengthy time, the section that was supported by the lower trunk could become dislodged and fall due to wind. Ones that have been totally uprooted and laying on the ground create ground hazards and may conceal snakes and other animals under the trunk. Walking around these is the preferred path rather than stepping over them due to the possibility of snakebites or

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other animal bites. Cutting these trees resting on the ground can result in even more dangers, as the weight of the base (especially if soil is still held in the root system), can be acting as a counterbalance, causing the base and lower trunk to suddenly spring up if a significant portion of the upper trunk is cut off.

A **Hangup** is a tree lodged in another tree, preventing it from falling to the ground. Over time, the weight of the hangup weakens the limbs of the other tree, resulting in the Hangup falling. As the hangup rots over time, the portions of the Hangup that are supporting its weight weaken, also resulting in the Hangup unexpectedly falling. Even a slight breeze could be all it takes to cause a Hangup to fall. Be aware of Hangups and go around them whenever possible. The key to remaining safe in a wildland area is constant situational awareness. Be aware of your surroundings at all times.





Photo Credit: Terry1128

Remember the triple look:

- LOOK UP
- LOOK DOWN
- LOOK ALL AROUND

And listen as well. The sound of cracking branches could be a warning of danger, or simply an animal scurrying through a tree, but you'll never know if you aren't aware of your surroundings.

If searching a wildland area, it would not be a bad idea to assign someone to be maintaining awareness of what's going on up in the trees ahead of you rather than looking down for clues related to your search effort.

Holiday Safety

By: 1st Lt. Ian Barnes, MAR-NC-001 Wing CIS Officer, Guilford Composite Squadron Commander

The holidays bring fun and excitement to family and friends, often including large gatherings and traditions not seen at other times of the year. The time reconnecting, visiting with loved ones and making new memories can be rejuvenating and good for the spirit.

These precious times also bring with them unique hazards. These hazards are often referred to as having low frequency but higher risk;

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Photo Credit: MAR 2024 NatCap Encampment



Photo Credit: 2026 West Virginia Drill Academy

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a heightened category on a risk vs frequency scale. This means we should pay particular attention to hazard mitigation in specific areas.

Thanksgiving, often being a fun-filled gathering of family or friends, typically includes cooking in larger volumes with alternative cooking practices like deep frying. This creates additional risks not seen during other times of the year. It is important that we keep these higher risks at the forefront to ensure overall safety.

The National Fire Protection Association lists Thanksgiving as the peak day for home cooking with three times the daily average for fire incidents. On Thanksgiving Day in 2024, 80% of structure fires were due to cooking.

Fortunately, the NFPA also provides the following safety tips to help mitigate fires:

- Stay in the kitchen when you are cooking on the stove top so you can keep an eye on the food.
- Stay in the home when cooking your turkey, and check on it frequently.
- Keep children away from the stove. The stove will be hot and kids should stay three feet away.
- Make sure kids stay away from hot food and liquids. The steam or splash from vegetables, gravy or coffee could cause serious burns.
- Keep matches and utility lighters out of the reach of children — up high in a locked cabinet.
- Never leave children alone in room with a lit candle.
- Make sure your smoke alarms are working. Test them by pushing the test button.

Turkey fryers are strongly discouraged by the NFPA, citing large amounts of oil at high temperatures, which can cause devastating burns. Partnering with the Consumer Safety Commission, the NFPA has created a video that demonstrates the hazards associated with incorrect Turkey Fryer usage. If your household chooses to deep fry your turkey you should do so with great caution ensuring to follow appropriate instructions and never deep fry a turkey inside a residence, building, or garage. The US Fire Administration (USFA) cautions that frying foods puts you at the greatest risk of cooking fires. They have provided tips to make turkey frying as safe as possible.



Photo Credit: NCR 2026 Cadet Competition

Safety News & Reminders

Looking Ahead: 2027 Safety Focus Areas

- The 2027 Safety Focus Areas will be released before the end of the year. Once published, they can be found on the *Safety Focus Areas and Resources* page under the CAPSafety menu. Be sure to check the page regularly for updates, supporting materials, and additional resources as they become available. **View Safety Focus resources here.**

Annual SMS Program Review Resources Now Available

- New resources have been added to the Safety Document Master List to support completion of the required Annual Safety Management System (SMS) Program Review. Separate templates are now available for both Wings and Regions.
- The Annual SMS Program Review helps leaders evaluate how effectively their Safety Management System is functioning, identify areas where additional support is needed, and prioritize improvements for the coming year. This review is required by CAPR 160-1, para. 4.8.

Important Due Dates

- Wing SMS Program Reviews: Due to their Region Director of Safety by **30 November**
- Region SMS Program Reviews: Due to CAP/SE by **15 January**

These resources are available under the *Safety Document Master List*. **View SMS resouces here.**

Updated CAPSIS Resources Available

- Several new and updated resources have been added to the *Guides and Checklists* section of the CAP Safety Information System (CAPSIS) webpage.

New resources include:

- A revised CAPSIS Wing Occurrence Workflow reflecting the updated causal factors implemented in CAPSIS on October 1.
- The new CAPSIS Causal Factors Guide, which provides clear definitions and guidance to support consistent occurrence reporting and improve alignment across the safety community.

These resources are highly recommended for Wing and Region safety officers, occurrence reviewers, and anyone involved with safety event reporting.
View CAPSIS Resources here.

New Monthly Safety Training Templates

- To support unit-level safety education, we are beginning to publish Monthly Safety Training Templates in the *Safety Briefings and Learning Resources* section of the website.
- Since every unit safety officer is responsible for providing a monthly safety education briefing, these ready-to-use templates offer an easy way to deliver engaging, relevant training to members while reducing preparation time.

Watch for additional topics and resources to be added throughout the year. **Access the Templates here.**

Requests for The Dispatch Articles

Receive monthly safety education credit by taking this month's Safety Dispatch course in **Absorb**. Encourage your team to participate by enrolling in each month's course. || We welcome article submission for the upcoming FY27 editions of *The Dispatch*. Articles should be **250-300 words** and submitted to Safety, Health Services, or Chaplain Corps communities for consideration. Aviation-focused articles are also encouraged for future issues. Please submit articles to **safety@capnhq.gov**



Photo Credit: 2025 TXWG Encampment



Photo Credit: 2024 NatCap Encampment


Photo Credit: 2025 MIWG Encampment