



## Safety and Training Requirements: The Critical Balance

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How does a program director meet their curriculum's goals while maintaining safety when some activities have an inherent level of risk? This question has permeated my thoughts ever since taking on the position of Encampment Commander in the New Mexico Wing. One quote that I think does an excellent job of answering this question is from Bob Chapman: "The greatest responsibility of a leader is to give the people in your span of care grounded sense of hope for the future" (Safety Culture Summit: Made Extraordinary, 2021).

As leaders in Civil Air Patrol—down to the squadron commander—we are duty-bound to maintain the safety of our members. Perhaps the biggest part of this is creating a safety-minded culture with members who are first vigilant and confident to report any hazard they encounter, but this confidence can be easily broken with just one interaction with a commander that results in confrontation, rebuke, or inattention from the leader. Our first responsibility as leaders is to listen to our members' concerns with respect.

However, not every hazard can be eliminated, and some mitigation measures could have negative effects on a training program. One of these hazards is the summer heat that forces itself on the New Mexico Encampment and every encampment each year. In Civil Air Patrol, we may not be training future soldiers, sailors, airmen, guardians, or coast guardsmen so our risk tolerance is and should be low. Additionally, after completing encampment many cadets will attend national special activities such as glider encampments or specialized military camps. If cadets are going to be exposed to a higher risk, these specialized activities have preparations in place. The residual risk would be considered low because of the trained personnel and response equipment available at the event.

How do you meet an encampment curriculum while battling the dangerous hazard of heat? Along with listening to your people, we need to utilize and train them. A leader utilizes their people when they use a member's experience and knowledge to address safety issues, you may be surprised what creative mitigations can come out of this.

Everyone has probably heard the cliché statement "train your people" or "everyone is a safety officer." It is the safety officer's job, with the direction of a commander, to train the encampment staff to do two things: identify risks and mitigate those risks. The encampment operations and support staff are the first line of defense for the safety of students, and it is their responsibility to identify new risks and simultaneously mitigate them with new or preplanned measures. The safety officer is not left out of the loop—after successfully mitigating this risk, the staff member must report it to the safety officer so that it can be successfully integrated into the overall risk management plan. All this communication is not possible unless a commander trains his staff from the very beginning to recognize, recover from, and report risks with the assurance they will be addressed. This is summarized in Captain Scott Kelly's words "Safety has to be everyone's responsibility...everyone needs to know that they are empowered to speak up if there's an issue" (Safety Culture Summit: Made Extraordinary, 2021). This empowerment is easily broken through complacency, but hard to build solely on the CAPF-160/160S the risk management forms so a commander must rely on their people to make safety happen.