THE DISPATCH

Safety | Health Services | Chaplain Corps

CIVIL AIR PATROL

October 2026

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The Dispatch is for informational purposes. Unit Safety Officers and Health Service Officers are encouraged to use the articles in The Dispatch as topics for their monthly safety briefings and discussions. Members may go to **eServices - Learning Management System**, click "Absorb," search for this month's Safety Dispatch, complete the quiz, and earn safety education credit.

The Dispatch features articles focused on this month's theme, "Review and Renew," with contributions from Safety, Health Services, and the Chaplain Corps. In Civil Air Patrol, Review and Renew emphasizes improvement, encouraging reflection on actions while restoring readiness for future missions.

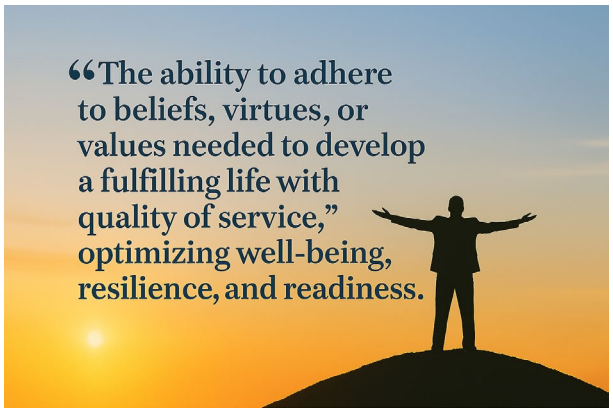
Primary Articles - Review and Renew

A Spiritual Flight: 100-Hour Annual

By: Ch, Lt Col Michael Morison, PCR-001

Closing out the 2026 Fiscal Year provides an opportunity to perform a self-care review. As astronaut Jim Irwin observed, we are on a flight through life. Just as our aircraft receive a 100-hour annual, we should take time to review, reset, and renew for the upcoming year.

Just as aircraft require inspection to operate safely and at peak performance, we must also perform at our best to accomplish our mission. This is what the Air Force calls spiritual fitness:



Therefore, we need to schedule time for an internal systems review.

Socrates noted that "the unexamined life is not worth living." A life without reflection can hinder performance. The spiritual dimension is our superpower, helping us reach deep within to do what needs to be done.

The question of meaning and purpose arises: Why am I here? The answer shapes who we are, why we act, and how well we perform. A strong sense of purpose builds resilience and guides actions that reflect our core values.

Spirituality is a state of being, while religion is a set of beliefs and practices. Both help develop meaning and purpose. At the heart of spiritual fitness is a moral compass guiding actions with integrity.

When you find your why (Simon Sinek), clarity, resilience, peace, and influence increase. Work feels lighter, relationships deeper, and problems make sense.

Declining spiritual fitness can show as isolation, negativity, ethical drift, or lack of fulfillment.

The Chaplain Corps is available to assist with spiritual fitness and readiness. If your squadron lacks a chaplain, contact your group or wing chaplain.

The Importance of Rest: Renew and Review

By: Lt Col Kent Bankhead, Director of Safety, GLR-001



Photo Credit: CAP University of Rocky Mountain Region 2026 Region Cadet Leadership School

In Civil Air Patrol and in our lives outside of CAP, we are often rushing, planning missions, executing those missions, getting kids to school, and completing the duties of our daily jobs. Amid this constant activity, we often fail to make time for adequate rest. This kind of rest goes beyond simply sleeping; it is the intentional time we take to pause, reflect, and recharge.

Eric Greitens, a Navy SEAL, writes:
"We spend the bulk of our lives doing things. And yet some of the most meaningful parts of our lives come when we simply choose to be, when we let time carry us, when we 'face sacred moments'. Space is something we strive to control and conquer; you can grab with your hands. You can't grab time. You can't slow it down or speed it up. Time is beyond your control. Yet you have to live meaningfully in time as well as space."

There are many different ways to find this kind of rest. Christians and Jews set aside one day each week to gather in worship and reconnect with God, while other faith traditions emphasize practices such as meditation. Others find renewal through walking, quiet reflection, or simply taking time to be still. Regardless of the method, the purpose remains the same: to renew the mind and body.

The benefits of taking intentional time to rest are well-documented:

- Reduces mental fatigue
- Stimulates creativity
- Improves mental health
- Enhances physical well-being
- Boosts productivity

Taking time to rest supports health by helping us renew our mental, emotional, and physical capacity. In those moments, we also review our actions and decisions to improve future performance.

Without renewal, fatigue and risk increase. By practicing renew and review, we strengthen resilience, improve mission effectiveness, and enhance safety in both CAP and daily life.

Review and Renew: The Discipline of Looking Again

By: Lt Col Todd Meyer, SE, HSO, CDI, National Safety Team Member, WI-203

In Civil Air Patrol, we place a strong emphasis on reviewing after things go wrong. Mishaps are analyzed, lessons are documented, and procedures are reinforced. But one of the most overlooked risks in any organization is what happens when things go right.

Success can be deceptive. When missions are completed without incident, there is a natural tendency to move on without reflection. Over time, small deviations from standards can become accepted as "the way we do things." What was once an exception becomes routine. This quiet drift often goes unnoticed—until it doesn't.



Photo Credit: 2026 CAP National Cadet Special Activities

Reviewing success requires discipline. It means taking a second look at actions that appeared to work and asking whether they were done correctly, consistently, and in accordance with established procedures. It requires leaders to ask not just "Did we succeed?" but "Did we do this the right way?"

Just as importantly, leaders must recognize and reinforce when things are done correctly. Positive reinforcement is a critical part of maintaining standards. When members execute a plan as intended, follow procedures, and achieve success, it should be acknowledged. In many cases, an after-action report may confirm that the plan was followed and everything went according to plan. That is not a trivial outcome; it is exactly what we should expect and reinforce.

Renewal follows review. It is the intentional act of reinforcing standards, correcting subtle deviations, and recommitting to the practices that keep our members safe.

Leaders set the tone. When they take the time to review both failures and successes and recognize when things are done right, they strengthen a culture where standards are understood, followed, and sustained.

The discipline of looking again ensures that success remains repeatable and that safety is not left to chance.

Information of Special Interest

Risk Management: Your Most Valuable Piece of Equipment

By: Lt Col James Bedient, NDWG/SE

When members think about safety in Civil Air Patrol, they often picture reflective vests, hydration packs, and first aid kits. While those are all important, the most important safety tool we possess isn't something we wear or carry – it's risk management: recognizing hazards and controlling them before they combine to create a mishap.



Photo Credit: Air Force Civil Engineering Academy Tyndall 2023

Every CAP activity involves some level of risk. Flying, driving, working on a flight line, finding that elusive ELT, drilling cadets, or simply setting up tables for a squadron meeting all present potential hazards. The difference between a successful activity and an accident often comes down to whether someone took a moment to identify those hazards and implement appropriate controls.

Risk management isn't something that lives on a form; it's a mindset.

Before every activity, ask yourself a few simple questions: What could go wrong? What has changed since I planned this? Remember that risk management doesn't end once the activity begins. Weather changes, fatigue builds, equipment fails, and conditions evolve. Keep asking questions: Are conditions changing? Is fatigue becoming a factor? Do we need to adjust our controls? Those questions take only a minute to answer, but they can prevent injuries, equipment damage, and lost mission capability. Don’t be afraid to pause, modify, or even halt an activity when circumstances dictate. That's not a sign of weakness; it's a hallmark of professionalism.

CAP's safety record isn't the result of luck. It's built on thousands of small, thoughtful decisions made by members every day. As volunteers, we owe it to one another, our families, and the communities we serve to make those decisions wisely. This month, challenge yourself to make risk management more than a requirement. Make it a habit. The next mishap you prevent will probably never make the news – and that's exactly the point.

The Night Light You Don't Want to See!

By: 1st Lt Murray Huling, SE, AEO, PPL-SEL/Heli, A&P, DC-045



Photo Credit: 2025 National Emergency Services Academy - Mission Aircrew School

Our Civil Air Patrol aircrews, operating nationwide as part of the largest general aviation fleet in the world, are in a unique position to encounter hazards we would rather avoid. Unfortunately, laser strikes continue to occur far too often across the country. Our typical flight profiles place us in environments where the risk of encountering unwanted laser illumination is especially high during night operations.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has been documenting "lasing" incidents since 2016. Unfortunately, incidents have remained unacceptably high since then, even though much has been published about the dangers and ramifications of being caught lasering an aircraft. FAA **data** shows that laser strikes on aircraft reached a peak in 2023 at 13,304. 2024 saw a slight drop to 12,840; last year, we declined further to 10,993; and so far this year, we are at 2,797.

Being a federal crime, the ramifications can be severe and costly for those caught lasering an aircraft; however, it is hard to catch them in the act. Individuals can be fined up to $11,000 per violation, and repeat offenders have received penalties as high as $30,800 for multiple offenses. Having retired from the FAA after serving 20 years as an aviation safety inspector, I received far too many reports of these incidents, a few of which caused damage to the aircrews' eyes and many of which resulted in missed approaches.

Those flying night missions who encounter a laser strike can help by reporting it immediately to air traffic control (ATC) while still in the air. ATC will treat the situation as an in-flight emergency until the crew states otherwise. Prompt notification also allows ATC to assist in dispatching local authorities to pursue the individual, using the provided location information.

Once safely on the ground, follow up by completing the appropriate FAA reporting questionnaire at: https://www.faa.gov/aircraft/safety/report/laserinfo/report_incident.

Fly Safe.



Photo Credit: 2025 National Emergency Services Academy - Mission Aircrew School

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Safe Today, Ready for Tomorrow

By: Lt Col Segundo Graniela, PR-129

In the Civil Air Patrol (CAP), safety isn't just a checklist or a briefing you sit through before a flight; it is the absolute bedrock of the entire organization. Whether cadets are conducting a ground search in rugged terrain, aerospace education officers are launching model rockets, or pilots are flying critical homeland security missions, a relentless focus on safety ensures that CAP can fulfill its congressionally chartered missions without compromising its most valuable asset: its volunteers.



Photo Credit: 2026 National Flight Academy Hawaii

1. Protecting Our People and Assets

At its core, prioritizing safety is about risk management and operational readiness. CAP operates millions of dollars' worth of corporate aircraft, vehicles, and communication equipment. A single lapse in judgment can lead to catastrophic equipment failure or, worse, severe injury. By embedding a robust safety culture into daily operations, CAP minimizes these risks. Cadets and adult members learn to identify hazards early through tools such as the Operational Risk Management (ORM) process. This mindset transforms safety from a restrictive set of rules into an empowering tool that allows members to execute complex missions boldly and successfully.

2. Developing Future Leaders

Furthermore, the emphasis on safety is vital to cadet development. CAP is premiering the next generation of aerospace leaders and responsible citizens. When young cadets are taught to respect safety protocols, such as wearing proper personal protective equipment (PPE) and performing a pre-flight inspection, they learn accountability, discipline, and critical decision-making. These habits transcend their CAP service, preparing them to be safety-conscious professionals in the military, commercial aviation, or corporate world.

3. Safeguarding Trust and Reputation

Finally, CAP's reputation relies heavily on its safety record. As a non-profit organization and the official auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, CAP enjoys immense public trust. The communities we serve need to know that when a disaster strikes, CAP will arrive as a highly trained, disciplined, and safe force. A culture that trivializes safety invites accidents, which can damage public trust and jeopardize federal funding or partnerships.

Ultimately, focusing on safety in all CAP activities ensures that every volunteer returns home safely at the end of the day, keeping the organization mission-ready, respected, and resilient for years to come.

Fatigue: The Hazard You Can't See

By: Lt Col James Bedient, NDWG/SE

Pilots are taught to respect weather, aircraft limitations, and changing mission conditions. Yet one of the greatest hazards in aviation is often overlooked because it isn't visible out the cockpit window or on a radar display – it's fatigue.

Fatigue doesn't announce itself with red Xs on the PFD or a warning horn. Instead, it quietly erodes judgment, slows reaction time, narrows attention, and increases the likelihood of mistakes. A fatigued pilot may miss a radio call, overlook a checklist item, or continue a flight into deteriorating weather rather than recognizing the need to change plans. The same is true for mission observers, scanners, aerial photographers, ground team members, and incident staff. Fatigue affects every member of the team, regardless of position.



Photo Credit: SWR Cadet Leadership School 2024

Civil Air Patrol operations often involve early mornings, long days, demanding missions, and extended travel. Add summer heat, dehydration, or consecutive days of activity, and fatigue can become a significant hazard. The solution isn't to "push through it." Professionalism means recognizing when you're no longer performing at your best and taking appropriate action before fatigue leads to poor decisions.

Managing fatigue begins long before the mission starts. Prioritize adequate sleep, stay hydrated, eat regularly, and be honest with yourself about your level of alertness. Caffeine is not a substitute for rest! During an activity, monitor your teammates and yourself. Keep aware of the flight duty day and crew rest requirements found in CAPR 70-1: a fourteen-hour duty day with no more than nine hours of flight time, and ten hours of uninterrupted crew rest between duty periods. If someone appears unusually tired or distracted, or makes uncharacteristic mistakes, speak up. A short break, a crew rotation, or delaying a sortie may be all that's needed to prevent a mishap.

Equipment can be repaired, and schedules can be adjusted. People cannot be replaced. The best crews aren't the ones who press on despite fatigue—they're the ones who recognize it, manage it, and ensure everyone returns home safely at the end of the day.

** CAP's Safety, Health Services, and Chaplain Corps Communications **

REMINDERS:

Take the Safety Dispatch – October 2026 course in Absorb to receive your monthly safety education credit. Please encourage your fellow team members to participate by enrolling in the Safety Dispatch course each month.





CAP Reinforces Safety Culture with Reporting of Safety Significant Occurrences

Civil Air Patrol promotes a strong safety reporting culture where every member plays an essential role. All Safety Significant Occurrences (SSOs), including accidents, injuries or illnesses, vehicle accidents, aircraft damage, and any other events listed in **CAPR 160-2**, must be reported through CAPSIS. SSOs are defined as any observed outcome during a CAP mission or activity that results in, or could have resulted in, damage to equipment or facilities, injury to a member, or a member's illness.

Timely reporting in CAPSIS ensures compliance with CAPR 160-2, improves our ability to identify hazards and causal factors, and helps safeguard our missions, our resources, and our members.

Request for *The Dispatch* Articles

We welcome article submissions for the upcoming 2026 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 the appropriate functional area:

- Safety: **safety@capnhq.gov**
- Health Services: **sleighton@capnhq.gov**
- Chaplain Corps: **mmorison@hc.cap.gov**
- Current and Previous Issues: *The Dispatch*

*CAP Safety Communications: **Website** - **Facebook** - **Email***