



JOHNSTON COUNTY CADET SQUADRON
CIVIL AIR PATROL
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE AUXILIARY
3223-A Swift Creek Road Smithfield, N.C. 27577

**2008 Johnston County Cadet Squadron
Crisis Communications Plan**

Applicability:

This plan applies to the Johnston County Cadet Squadron (hereinafter referred to as the *Unit*), North Carolina Wing, Middle East Region, Civil Air Patrol. It is the responsibility of the commander and staff to be familiar with this plan. This policy does not apply to Emergency Services Mission Operations. This plan does not override normal command functions and decisions of incident command staff or wing command staff, nor does it override or supplant CAPR 190-1 or NCWG Supplement 190-1. However, command staff should be familiar with the contents of this plan and use it as a guide when responding to a crisis. The plan is designed to be used in conjunction with the normal decision-making process of the Unit Command Staff. This plan was prepared by the Unit Public Affairs Officer, Lt Col Donald Beckett.

The purpose of this plan is to:

- Ensure the flow of accurate and timely information to Unit leadership, staff, higher commands, the media and the public during a crisis
- Provide the media with a reasonable level of access per CAP regulations and policy
- Develop and provide unified messages in a crisis or emergency
- Minimize unnecessary damage to the integrity and reputation of the Unit , Wing and CAP
- Counteract inaccurate criticism by providing accurate and honest information

A crisis situation is defined as any situation deemed by the Unit Staff and Unit Commander as having a major impact on the Unit, the Wing, CAP as an organization or the public. Examples of a crisis situation may include, but are not limited to incidents at CAP activities involving serious injury and/or loss of life, terrorism, a member death, natural disasters, major crimes, riots, or major disruptions of operations. Crisis situations may include law enforcement investigations or other situations that require a public response.

This plan is not intended to change the way emergencies are initially reported. All applicable CAP regulations will be followed in these initial and subsequent reports.

It is the goal of this *crisis communications plan* to establish guidelines for dealing with a variety of situations, and to ensure that leaders and communicators are familiar with those procedures and their roles in the event of a crisis. The plan is designed to be used in

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conjunction with the normal decision-making hierarchy of the Unit and does not supplant that decision-making process.

Each crisis or emergency will require a unique public information response. The extent of the response will depend on the nature of the crisis.

Assumptions:

Often the only information the public receives about an emergency is through the media; therefore, media relations are an essential component of this crisis plan. Timing is crucial and it is essential that a response must be issued as soon as possible with follow-up bulletins as required on a regular basis whenever possible.

Rumors can spread quickly via email, blogs and online forums. Therefore, it is important that responses be issued as quickly as possible via various channels of online communication such as official news releases and postings to the Unit webpage.

A crisis situation may be considered "breaking news" and is likely to result in more public exposure for the Unit than dozens of "good news" stories.

Crisis Communications Team:

A Crisis Communications Team (CCT) will be established that consists of the following members:

Unit Commanding Officer
Unit Deputy Commander
Unit Director of Emergency Services
Unit Public Affairs Officer
The team may also call upon:

- Those with experience in working a crisis
- Parents if cadets are involved and are needed
- Expert sources as needed

A roster of the Unit's CCT can be found in Appendix A to this plan.

The CCT exists to advise the commander and craft the message during a crisis. The commander will make the decision after advice from the CCT.

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The PAO will annually prepare a proposed CCT list and submit it to the Unit Commander for approval. This will be done by 31 January of each Calendar Year.

Crisis Center: It is expected that crisis teams will work virtually thru e-mail, telephones and conference calls. If the need exists to set up a crisis center, the Unit PAO will select a location with the approval of the Unit Commander. The primary site for the Crisis Center will be the Unit Headquarters, Johnston County Airport Terminal Building, unless it is deemed necessary to establish a Crisis Center at some forward location.

Crisis Materials: The Unit PAO is assigned the task of maintaining materials to assist in the management of a crisis. As a minimum the PAO will maintain the following materials, which may be electronic in nature:

- This Plan
- Roster of the team
- Contact information for all higher headquarters and relevant Unit staff members
- Media Contact List
- CAP Media Kits and Fact sheets
- Positive statistics about CAP found on the National and NC Wing Webpage, CAPWatch or www.capnhq.gov, E-services)

Spokesman: The Unit Commander and Unit PAO are the spokespersons for the Unit and will be expected to work with local media. The Unit PAO will maintain contact with higher headquarters, the NC Wing Public Affairs Director, and other headquarters as directed.

Electronic Resources: The PAO will create messages and announcements as appropriate to communicate with CAP members and the public. These crisis communications will be approved by the Unit Commander or designated representative before being disseminated.

Phases of Response

Immediate: The Unit Commander and the PAO will determine if an official statement should be prepared and released. If warranted, they and the CCT will develop answers to specific questions that may be asked by the media.

CAP will always tell the truth. Tell it and move on. You will build a better long-term relationship with the media and the public if you are candid in bad or rough times. Never say "No Comment." Always be fully honest. If you do not know an answer, say so and tell the media you will find out and get back to them.

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The PAO will brief staff and other area commanders who may have to answer questions from local media. Avoid verbal, off the cuff remarks in any crisis situation. Information given to the media should be in written form and copies should be provided to the CCT.

As part of this phase, talking points should be developed. (See Appendices B, C and D.) They should be agreed to by the crisis team and delivered to all members authorized to speak to the media.

The PAO will obtain basic information (type of crisis/emergency; time of emergency; actions taken; areas and number of people involved; injuries or fatalities; extent of damage) and prepare an official news release for approval by the Unit Commander. For crises that are directly associated with an incident with an assigned Incident Commander (IC), the IC is the representative of the Wing Commander and, therefore, must approve all press releases and other media contact.

Key PAO Tasks:

- The PA staff will verify all sources of information.
- The PAO will clear news releases with the Commander as quickly as possible before releasing information to the media.
- The PAO will maintain a log and document all activities and media inquiries.

Ongoing Period:

In an ongoing crisis, the PAO (assisted by the CCT) as appropriate will:

- Provide, via the news media and on the Internet, the public and constituents with basic information concerning the crisis situation
- Provide, via electronic mail or other means such as CAP radio frequencies, the membership with basic information about the crisis, and will ensure that copies of all updates are concurrently sent to higher HQ including the NC Wing, Middle East Region and CAP National HQs.
- Keep the public, media and constituents informed of the situation and provide advice on what they should or should not do to prevent further damage, injury or loss of life, panic or interference with emergency response efforts. Information will be provided via the Unit and Wing website and via news releases to the area media, which instructs the public on how to obtain further advice or information.

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Appendix A

Crisis Communications Team

Duty Assignment	Role	Name	Contact Information
Unit CC	Commander	Capt. Jerry Simmons	919-413-5277 Email: jerry.airplane6@gmail.com
Unit DCC	Team Leader	Lt. Col Pat O'Neal	919-590-3534 Email: poneal583@embarqmail.com
Unit PAO	Spokesperson	Lt. Col Don Beckett	919-989-7037 Email: Donald_b@embarqmail.com

Experts and Consultants

Appendix B

CAP Leadership/MIO/PAO Talking Points

1. Adapt answers as appropriate to the specific accident or incident
2. Always emphasize the priority on safety and the well being of our members in all operations and activities.
3. Do not answer hypothetical questions
4. Do not speculate or offer opinions. Stick to the verified facts
5. Always be truthful
6. Do not ever say, "No comment"

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Appendix C

CAP Leadership/MIO/PAO Talking Points

Fatalities or serious injuries sustained by CAP members

Adapt these general talking points as appropriate to the specific accident or incident. In many cases, the primary comments in bold will be all that needs to be said. Add the rest of the information only if asked.

- 1. Our hearts go out to the families of the members involved, and to all of CAP with a professional level of skill, even though they are volunteers.**
- 2. CAP has an outstanding Flying Safety Record – considering the fact that CAP maintains the largest fleet in the U.S.—550 aircraft, the rate of incidents is minimal compared to the General Aviation fleet as a whole.**

Additional information - only if asked to elaborate:

When you consider that Civil Air Patrol's missions are typically flown only 1,000 feet above ground level, leaving little time to react in an emergency, Civil Air Patrol's low accident rate is even more significant. Though CAP flies in a high-risk environment, one of the reasons our accident rate is so low is because we have successfully used operational risk management (ORM) - a technique developed by the Air Force safety community and eagerly adopted by CAP – to identify and reduce risk at all levels.

Every one of our pilots are required to take a flight safety check at least annually, and they are required to complete an FCC mandated flight review with a qualified instructor biennially.

We have a safety education program whereby both aircrew and non-aircrew members are briefed on safety issues during monthly safety meetings.

In addition, every Civil Air Patrol wing is given an evaluation on its ability to perform search and rescue/disaster relief missions biennially by the U.S. Air Force.

- 3. CAP aircrews are absolute professionals and highly trained in all aspects of search and rescue, including mountain-flying techniques.**

Additional information - only if asked to elaborate:

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Aerial search and rescue is clearly a demanding mission, given the requirement to fly typically only 1,000 feet above the ground. However, our aircrew members fully understand the dangers associated with Search and Rescue missions and train hard to minimize them, but they consider their duties critical. Over the years, Civil Air Patrol has been credited with saving nearly 100 lives on average every year.

4. Civil Air Patrol maintains its aircraft rigorously to standards that meet or exceed FAA standards. The maintenance is timely, thorough and carried out by FAA-certified mechanics CAP-wide. Bottom line -- CAP maintenance policies are stricter than or as strict as general aviation standards in America, with greater emphasis placed on regular aircraft inspections throughout the fleet.

5. There is no way I could speculate on what may have caused this to happen. This accident/incident will be the subject of an official investigation.

Do not feel that you must rush an answer. If you have to, pause 10 seconds after the question is asked to formulate your answer, no problem. Remember that TV stations, in particular, will probably only use 10 or 15 seconds worth of your actual words, anyway.

APPENDIX D:

**CAP Leadership/MIO/PAO Talking Points
CAP member(s) accused of sexual misconduct**

Adapt these general talking points as appropriate to the specific accident or incident. In many cases, the primary comments in bold will be all that needs to be said. Add the rest of the information only if asked.

1. The status of the accused is:

No longer a member of the Civil Air Patrol

Has been suspended pending the outcome of any investigation ** if investigation is in progress **

Other (was never a CAP member, is a member of an outside organization, or etc.)

2. No complaint has been filed with any CAP adult member, local authorities, or with any cadet family member. ** assuming this is true **



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- 3. Civil Air Patrol will cooperate fully with local law enforcement officials to determine the validity of any complaints. ** assuming a formal complaint has been filed or an investigation is being conducted ****
- 4. The Civil Air Patrol Cadet Protection Program ensures that more than one adult member is always present on activities with our youth members, and in particular, our rules prohibit private "one-on-one" interaction between individual youth and adult members.**
- 5. The Civil Air Patrol values its youth members and provides mandatory training to all members over 18 years of age on what we consider acceptable or unacceptable conduct.**

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