

Understanding Specialty Training Tracks

CAP Officer Basic Course

Introduction

This lesson will provide an introduction to the Senior Member Professional Development Specialty Track Program. This program is established by regulation as part of the Professional Development (PD) Program in order to allow members to train in areas of personal interest or areas pertinent to the unit in order to develop proficiency specific to CAP tasks and missions. Obtaining certain ratings within a specialty is also required for progression within the Senior Member Professional Development Program, except for professionally appointed officers.

1. Describe the structure of the Specialty Track Program

Specialty tracks were developed to allow senior members the opportunity to train and develop proficiency in areas of personal interest or in areas that are needed to support unit operations.

The structure of the Specialty Track Program can be found in CAP Regulation 50-17, *Senior Member Professional Development Program*. As part of the PD program you are required to earn specialty track ratings at three levels, in Level II -- Technical Training, in Level III -- Management, and in Level IV -- Command and Staff. Refer to paragraph 4-2 of CAPR 50-17 for more information.

Selecting Your Specialty

There are prerequisites before enrolling in a specialty track. To enroll in a specialty track, you must be a CAP member in good standing, must have completed Level I of the Professional Development Program in accordance with CAPR 50-17, and must also be approved by your unit commander before enrollment.

After reviewing the information provided in CAPR 50-17, *Senior Member Professional Development Program* regarding specialty tracks and considering the list of available specialty tracks, it is time to select tracks that are of personal interest to you. Generally, two questions arise: what your interests are related to your professional career experience or your specific hobbies or personal interests; and what is best for the unit. You should try to identify at least two tracks that are of interest to you.

Each specialty track is assigned a code. That code designates the specialty and also identifies which CAP pamphlet contains information about that track. For example, the Professional Development Specialty Track is assigned code 204. Therefore, information about the track and its ratings are found in CAP Pamphlet 204, *Specialty Track Study Guide-Senior Program Officer*. The current specialty track codes are:

200 Personnel	216 Cadet Program
201 Public Affairs	217 Safety
202 Finance	218 Plans and Programs
203 Inspector General	219 Legal
204 Professional Development	220 Health Services
205 Administration	221 Chaplain
206 Logistics	222 Command
210 Flight Operations	223 Historian
211 Operations	225 Moral Leadership

212 Standardization - Evaluation	226 Recruiting and Retention
213 Emergency Services	227 Information Technology
214 Communication	228 Drug Demand Reduction
215 Aerospace Education	229 Organizational Excellence

¹ *Specialty codes 219, 220, and 221 are used to designate professional appointments. A CAP Pamphlet may not exist for these specialties.*

² *Specialty code 222 Command is a designation only, not a specialty track.*

Click above at **Specialty Track Pamphlets** for a complete list of pamphlets and related publications.

Obtain the CAP pamphlets for the tracks you have selected and review the study guide information. You should pay particular attention to information about the duties and responsibilities of members holding that specialty and any prerequisites that may exist.

Meet with your unit Professional Development Officer (PDO) and Commander to determine if your selections match the unit's needs. The unit commander will determine the appropriate track based on the member's input and unit needs (cadets are not assigned specialty tracks and do not train using this program). Three primary factors are used by the unit commander to determine the initial selection for a specialty track:

1. Member's current duty position in the unit.
2. Unit's manning requirements, which duty assignments are available and the needs to be filled in the unit.
3. Member's capabilities, interests, and achievements.

At this meeting you will agree on one specialty track in which to enroll. Each track is associated with a duty assignment. The duty assignment is the actual job you will do for the unit. The unit commander should assign a specialty track trainer. This is another unit member who has already achieved the rating you are seeking or has sufficient experience to help guide you through your learning. If no one at the unit qualifies, ask the unit commander to seek out a trainer from another unit or the wing. Ask the commander or PDO to record your specialty track in e-Services and your CAPF45 with a rating of NONE. This notes on eServices that you are in training for that specialty and starts the clock for any service requirements.

That's it! You're ready to begin your training.

2. Identify the basic training qualification for each of the specialty tracks.

Each specialty track has specific requirements to complete before a member is awarded the Technician, Senior, or Master rating. Specific requirements vary widely depending on the publication date of the pamphlet and specialty. Older publications tend to be less uniform in format and procedures. All pamphlets are planned for rewrite in order to standardize to the newest format and procedures. This section is intended to provide a general overview of the procedures and requirements using a recently published pamphlet. For specific details, please consult the appropriate CAP Pamphlet for your specialty.

Each specialty track consists of three skill ratings: Technician, Senior, and Master. Each rating is obtained through self-study and on-the-job training (OJT). Some specialty tracks including Cadet Programs, Communications, and Information Technology Officer also require successful completion of online exams for each rating level. Each specialty track pamphlet identifies appropriate schools, courses, and suggested readings. As a member progresses through each rating, the unit commander approves and assigns the rating to the member in eServices. This becomes a permanent part of the member's record.

Generally requirements for each skill level rating are divided into three areas: (1) Reading Lists, (2) Knowledge, Training and Performance (3) and Service. After completing all requirements then you may apply for the rating.

Upon enrollment, you can begin work on the knowledge, training, and performance requirements for your specialty. Read the publications listed on the reading list. Focus on the sections pertaining to the knowledge requirements for your specialty. Discuss the readings with your trainer to ensure that your general understanding of them is accurate.

Knowledge Requirements are objectives describing what each student is expected to know and should be able to demonstrate before attaining the rating. Shadow your trainer and watch how they perform tasks related to the knowledge requirements. Seek opportunities to perform tasks that are related to the knowledge and service requirements, under your trainer's guidance. Finally you should review the knowledge and service requirements with your trainer to ensure that you have fulfilled each. Make sure you fully understand the emphasis items listed in the knowledge requirements section of the pamphlet.

Service Requirements are objectives describing what each student is expected to complete through active participation before attaining the rating. Typically the service requirements for a given specialty are cumulative. For example, 6 months service in a specialty-related unit position is required for a Technician rating, another year of service for a Senior rating, and another two years of service for a Master rating. These requirements vary from specialty to specialty. Another service requirement may be the completion of an online test for the rating.

If your specialty requires an online test, you can access the test via the website. Upon completion of the test, you will be given the opportunity to print a certificate of completion. The test results become a permanent part of your eServices records.

For each specialty there are four levels of experience and expertise. They include un-rated, Technician, Senior and Master ratings. Those who have declared a specialty, but are yet un-rated, are in training. As with all people in a new job they have a lot to learn and require supervision, experience and education. They should work closely with their mentor, OJT supervisor and PDO to earn their Technician rating.

Once you have earned your Technician rating, you can handle routine paperwork and handle routine matters in your specialty/duty assignment.

At the Senior level you handle all facets of the specialty/duty assignment with little or no supervision. You can accomplish short and moderate length tasks in your duty assignment with little or no supervision.

Those with a Master rating can handle uncommon events, comfortably interact with other officers in the same duty assignment up and down your chain of command, provide guidance and training to those with lower ratings, make long term plans regarding your assigned duties, provide advice, and suggest improvements and policy in their area of expertise to commanders.

3. Describe the reporting procedures for entering, changing, or completing a specialty rating.

Specialty track ratings are recorded locally and at HQ CAP. Locally, the Commander's Evaluation and Rating Certification Checklist provided in the specialty track pamphlet provides written verification by the commander of activities performed, tasks accomplished, positions held, knowledge possessed, and program familiarity acquired by the specialty track candidate.

It is the responsibility of the candidate to inform the commander of achievement of the evaluation items. Once completed, the original checklist is placed in the member's personnel file and annotated on the member's CAPF 45, *Senior Member Professional Development Record* which documents progression through specialty tracks. Members' progress is also listed on the Professional Development Report (PDR), which is available on-line under eServices (<http://members.gocivilairpatrol.com>).

After a student satisfies all requirements for a specialty track rating, the unit Professional Development, Personnel or Administration Officer will log onto e-Services and update the specialty rating using the "Senior Member Specialty Track" application. Once the specialty track is entered into the system, the unit commander will be notified and must approve on-line.

When students complete all knowledge and service requirements, as certified by their unit commander (or designee), they attain a new specialty track rating.

After you have completed all of the requirements for your specialty as set forth in the appropriate CAP pamphlet and your unit commander has approved your rating, he will have it entered into eServices. You are then authorized to wear the associated specialty badge. Each specialty has a specific badge for each skill rating.

Specialty badges when worn on the service uniform by men are worn centered below the pocket flap on the left breast pocket of the service coat or shirt when worn as an outer garment. Badges may also be worn centered on the right breast of the new style service coat, ½ inch above your nameplate. For women the badge will be worn on the service coat centered 1½ inches below the top of the welt pocket on the left breast, and/or on the right side, centered between the arm seam and lapel, ½ inch above your nameplate and/or ½ inch above the top row of ribbons; for blouses, badges are worn ½ inch above ribbons and/or ½ inch above your name plate. No more than two specialty badges may be worn on the uniform at once (not including professional badges such as lawyer, clergy, medical and operational badges such as ground team badge or wings.). For more information, see CAPR 39-3, *Award of CAP Medals, Ribbons and Certificates*, and CAPM 39-1, *CAP Uniform Manual*.

4. State how specialty ratings affect promotions.

Duty performance is key to success as an individual, as a unit, as an organization, in all parts of Civil Air Patrol. It is no wonder that specialty ratings are part of the requirements for promotion in CAP.

Before your next promotion you will need to receive credit for your Technician rating in at least one specialty. Your technician rating is also required for you to complete Level II of the Professional Development Program and receive your Davis Award.

Your Senior rating is needed for completion of Level III of the Professional Development Program which makes you eligible for the Loening Award and promotion to Major.

A Master rating is needed in at least one specialty for the Garber Award and to be eligible for promotion to Lt Col. For more details on the relation between training and promotion see CAPM 50-17, CAPM 35-5, the Professional Development lesson of this course and your unit PDO.

Lesson Summary and Closure

The Specialty Track Program is an integral part of the Senior Member Professional Development Program as outlined in CAP Regulation 50-17. Members should use the program to obtain on-the-job training and experience in areas of personal interest or areas in which their unit has specific needs. Specialty tracks have designated skill ratings of Technician, Senior, and Master. Each specialty track is well-defined and the procedures for obtaining each rating in the CAP Pamphlet for each specialty. Members are also authorized to display and be recognized for their skill level in a specialty by wearing the appropriate badge on their uniforms.

All members should identify and progress through the various ratings of their chosen specialty. As you work toward this goal, work with your unit Professional Development Officer and unit commander for assistance and for answers to any questions.

Works Cited

1. CAPR 50-17, *Senior Member Professional Development Program*
2. CAPR 39-1, *Award of CAP Medals, Ribbons, and Certificates*
3. CAPM 39-1, *CAP Uniform Manual*