

Unit Training Programs

Lesson Objective:

Lesson Objective: Comprehend the importance of unit training.

Desired Learning Outcomes:

1. Define unit training.
2. Identify the difference between active and passive training programs.
3. Discuss the importance of continual training.
4. Explain the importance of a meeting schedule when planning their training.
5. Identify what group, wing, region, and national schools provide to individuals.
6. Explain why the commander must advocate, support, & participate in unit training.

Lesson:

Unit Training Defined:

Unit training programs are the heart of Civil Air Patrol training. All the command level (wing, region, and national) schools in the organization will not work without unit training to give its members the basic skills necessary to work within the Civil Air Patrol. It is at the unit level where CAP members learn what CAP is, what their jobs are, and how they fit in to this superb organization.

Unit training programs fulfill this need. They give the units the framework to perform the normal, and not so normal, functions which make them thrive. An incoherent or nonexistent plan of programs drastically reduces the unit's efficiency because the members' skills will be poor, and those skills they do have may not be appropriate for the mission they perform.

As the commander it is incumbent upon you to take unit training seriously, and to work with your staff to develop coherent, effective programs to raise the readiness level of your people. This obligation cannot be delegated. You are at the lead in the effort.

Unit training is any activity which enhances the capabilities and or readiness of the unit through practice or acquisition of new skills. These skills may be as simple as proper uniform wear or as complicated as mission pilot qualification. Whatever the skill or task, units must have a program for training in the areas desired, and must have a member responsible for carrying out the training. Whoever is responsible must have a support structure in place to ensure the programs' success. This structure can be simple or complicated as the subject or skill dictates.

Effective Unit Training Needs:

- A _____ for training in the areas desired
- A _____ responsible for conducting training
- An effective support _____

Now, you may be thinking: *training?* It will be boring, my people don't like to train, and they won't show up. Agreed, ill planned and ill executed training can be monotonous and boring. However, you can spice up training to make it interesting and fun. You can have guest speakers, do joint training with other units, sponsor or participate in exercises, or use teaching aids such as PowerPoint presentations, video clips, and movies.

The point is that you don't have to always use one method. And you don't have to do everything yourself. You can get help from colleagues, other staff, other units, and higher headquarters. You don't have to use CAP produced materials. Feel free to supplement your training with materials from other sources. Professional journals, subject specific books, and materials from other non-profit professional organizations such as the National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR), International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM), the National Education Association (NEA), American Management Association (AMA), and Airline Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) are excellent examples of organizations which can provide material, subject matter, and assistance when designing your training.

Spice up Training

- Guest speakers
- Joint training
- Sponsor/participate in exercises
- Teaching aids
- Outside instructors
- Other than CAP materials

Individual training functions must fit into the overall training program and the functions of the unit. It makes no sense to have a training function for an area which does not concern the unit. This is not to say that members cannot pursue individual interests, to the contrary; members should be encouraged to broaden their areas of expertise. You'll need to decide whether unit resources should be expended to support wholly individual efforts, and if so, how much.

List three ways you'd spice up your training program:

- _____
- _____
- _____

The Difference between Active and Passive Training Programs:

Training programs fall into two basic categories: passive and active. Passive programs do not require much outside support and rely instead almost entirely on individual motivation and effort. Good examples are: Distance Learning and on-line courses or ES upgrade training for individual achievement.

Passive programs are good for members who have a thorough basic knowledge of the subject matter and wish to upgrade, or those members who wish to broaden their knowledge base and do not currently have responsibility to carry out the task - such as taking on a second specialty for cross training. This is not to say that passive training is not supervised. Not at all, however the supervision is not as direct, and for the most part members determine their own schedule, objectives, and focus.

Active training programs are those which require support beyond the individual student. These programs are usually group efforts with more than one student participating. Examples include the on-the-job training (OJT) found in the professional development training program, the in squadron portion of the cadet training program, much ES primary training, communications training, etc.

OJT is an active program? Yes! OJT refers to the learning environment for the student, not the level of outside support or instruction. The learning environment for the OJT student is task based and is in the actual workplace. These students remain out of the classroom. They are taught and supervised but in a different setting. Learning takes place by students seeing the task actually being completed and explained, then having the students perform the task and receive feedback from their OJT trainer or supervisor.

On-the- job Training

- Learning is _____ based
- Usually in the _____
- An ideal way of learning for seniors

The OJT supervisor's job is to formulate a plan of action and a set of objectives for their students to achieve within the work environment. It can be as simple as: teaching a filing system or maintaining the testing file and records. With that established, they go about teaching the skill to the student and adjusting their plan of action to the skill level, attention span, and progress of the student.

OJT Supervisor Responsibilities

- Formulating a _____ and _____ for the student
- _____ the skills to the student in the work setting
- Providing immediate _____ to the student throughout the process

These programs rely on outside administration - yours as commander, and the staff members directly involved in giving the training. They must be planned, structured, administered, and updated continually for the training to stay fresh and accurate.

Can passive programs be made into active ones? For the most part, yes. In fact, it's probably a good idea, since more often than not the learning experience can be enhanced through the increased interest, support, and oversight. A perfect example is the OJT illustration above.

Both program styles offer advantages to the unit and must be incorporated into the overall plan.

Importance of Continual Training:

Training must take place continually, for all functions, throughout the year. Memory and skill retention decreases with lack of practice; so if your programs aren't constantly on the move, updating, teaching new skills and refreshing old ones, your readiness will suffer.

The bottom line is you can't have a good training program if you only train one season out of the year. You can't have a good training program if you don't teach the skill again and again - not only to new people, but refresher training for others. It takes time, and a commitment to making training just as much a part of the meeting as opening ceremonies - for the seniors as well as cadets.

Two questions arise: Exactly what should you train your people for, and when do you have the time to do it? Those are valid questions, because there is not a lot of time to do everything necessary, especially in a volunteer organization.

You should train your people to perform the jobs necessary to effectively run the unit and advance their personal and professional development. That means that your staff members should be trained; all your seniors should be progressing through the Professional Development Program (at their own pace), your cadets should be progressing through the Cadet Program (at their own pace), and finally, all your

members should be able to support the CAP mission, especially in your unit's area of expertise or focus.

This takes effort by all members. As commander, you are the final authority, and are primarily responsible for the performance, and the training of your unit. You have the Deputy Commander for Cadets (in a composite unit) and the Professional Development Officer (in all units), the Aerospace Education Officer, and the Emergency Services Officer (among others) to assist you in administering the training programs. Their job is to run those training programs according to your guidance.

They will take advantage of training aids, lessons, and CAP mandated requirements to put together the training programs for your unit. Some are very straight forward, such as the Specialty Track Study Guide checklists in the Professional Development Program. Others, such as satisfying Emergency Services Training requirements, and aerospace education activities require creativity.

Why is continual training important?

Utilizing a Meeting Schedule when Planning Training:

Planning and administering training are made much easier when they are incorporated into the regular meeting schedule. Training should not be ancillary to the meeting, but an integral part. Further, because your meeting schedule already has a basic framework of subjects to talk about and tasks to accomplish, it also provides the basic framework for your training. So, you have both the time and subject areas to focus on.

How do you use it? First, look at your schedule framework, and decide what subject areas you want to focus on. Then use the schedule to build time in the meetings to provide the necessary training. Once you have the time dedicated you can go about forming the lesson, and gathering the people and resources that you need. Again, this takes commitment.

Unit training programs aren't the only way to give your members the training they need. Granted, there are many things members need to know that would require more resources than your unit has. Examples of this would be: disaster relief exercises, large area SAREXs, mission check pilot training, etc. Several requirements for professional development training awards and cadet achievement are designed to be administered higher in the chain of command. Again, examples would be cadet encampments, squadron leadership schools, etc.

Group, Wing, Region, and National Schools:

There are a variety of in place and available training programs open to your members at the group (if applicable), wing, region, and national levels. Some are CAP-wide programs which are merely administered at lower levels of command. Others are designed and administered by that level of command (typically wing and region).

Command Level Schools

- For training efforts which require more resources than any _____
- For education requiring a _____
- Schools _____ to be administered at a higher level than the unit

- A. **Groups** may concentrate on ES type training, and professional development training such as Training Leaders of Cadets, Unit Commanders Courses, Squadron Leadership Schools, and Corporate Learning Courses, etc.
- B. **Wings** provide all this training and may also run mission pilot schools, cadet encampments, and wing wide training for commanders and staff officers, and aerospace education seminars.
- C. **Regions** may provide all of the training previously outlined, and may also run AE conferences and the Chaplain Region Staff College, a program specially designed for CAP chaplains. In addition, regions hold a Region Staff College annually.
- D. Finally, **national** level schools offer advanced training and special activities for members of all ages. These range from the National Staff College, which is an executive level course in leadership and management for those qualified seniors who wish to receive the Gill Robb Wilson Award and complete their senior training program, to the National Emergency Services Academy in which members of all ages receive ground team and navigation training, to the National Legal Officer College a program which formalizes training for CAP's legal officers. In addition to NLOC, the National Inspector General College is offered in alternate years for Inspectors.

There are hundreds of training opportunities at the various levels of command offering thousands of CAP members each year the chance to advance their skills for the good of your unit. Look into them. However, the most important thing to remember is that no amount of group, wing, region, or national training will do you much good as commander if you don't have an effective training program yourself at your unit.

Commander Advocacy, Support, & Participation in Unit Training:

Throughout the development and execution of training programs there is one common thread - and that is **commitment**. You as commander must be the first one committed to effective unit training. You must advocate dedication and instill a sense of commitment in your staff and subordinates, and back that up with the logistical and managerial support needed to assist them in developing and administering unit programs.

In addition, you must be a participant and continue your own training - developing yourself personally and professionally. You must be the example. If you are not, your people may doubt the commitment you work so hard to instill. You will also harm yourself because you won't stay current in the skills you need to command.

In this you have no alternative. If you don't show continuous interest and advocacy for training - both for yourself and for your people - your readiness will suffer. There will be no direction, no guidance, and no skill. Leadership in CAP training really **does** come from the top down.