

Preparing Cadets for Encampment

Squadron Commander's Guide

Although encampment is all about training, it is not a military boot camp. However, the training is intense! Squadron Commanders *must* ensure that cadets attending encampment for the first time have adequate training at their home unit. Set them up for success, not failure. When possible, cadets who previously attended encampment as flight sergeants or flight commanders on encampment cadet staff should conduct this important home unit training. Former encampment TAC Officers are also an excellent source of information as to the type of training needed.

Encampment *is not* the place for cadets to learn the following for the first time.

- How, when, and whom to salute.
- Recognition of different grade insignia.
- Proper wear of the CAP uniforms.
- The importance of military bearing, i.e. How to stand at attention.
- Basic drill maneuvers.
- CAP grooming standards.
- Basic personal hygiene and self care.
- Boots and shoes are painful when not broken in.

Although completion of the Curry Achievement is a prerequisite for *applying* to encampment, observations by senior and cadet staff during previous encampments indicate that completion of the Curry Achievement, alone, *does not* adequately prepare cadets. With a minimum passing score of the Curry exam and drill test, cadets know, at best, only about 80 percent of the material tested and many have almost no practical experience at applying this knowledge. Additional preparation by the squadron *should* cover all of the items on the list above.

Here are *some* examples of problems occurring at previous COWG Encampments.

- **Uniforms** – Missing uniform items, missing insignia, improperly placed sewn insignia, missing flight caps, missing flight cap insignia, missing BDU caps, missing belts. These items are not available at encampment and the staff does not have the time or capability to deal with these issues. The squadrons *must* deal with this before encampment. ***This is a unit responsibility – not an encampment responsibility!***
- **Military Bearing** – Most new cadets do not have a grasp of the importance of military bearing. They do not know how to stand at attention. On the first few days, one of the more common things heard from the flight sergeant is - "***Stop Looking Around!***"
- **Grooming Standards - Haircuts! Haircuts! Haircuts!** Staff does not have time to pull cadets from training in order to go to the barbershop for haircuts. In the past, some staff members have paid for cadet's haircuts because cadets showed up needing a haircut *and* without money. Cadets will be sent home prior to in processing if hair is not in accordance with grooming standards. If a cadet is dropped off with no money by someone other than a parent, encampment staff will not allow in processing until the problem is corrected. We conduct encampment at the Air Force Academy and are constantly in proximity to active duty personnel including USAFA cadets. Failure to meet grooming standards is a poor reflection on COWG Encampment and CAP and is unacceptable!
- **Drill** - Too many cadets show up with almost no drill experience. Simply passing the Curry drill examination *is not* adequate. Cadets need practice!
- **New boots and/or new shoes** - ***Do not allow cadets to show up at encampment with new or***

improperly fitted boots/shoes! They need to break-in boots and shoes. Blisters are the most common medical issue at encampment. This is caused by shoes and/or boots not fitting properly or not being broken in. ***This happens every year!***

Why are the items listed above important to know **before** coming to encampment? Encampment is very fast-paced with very little personal time; most time is spent in organized classes and activities. Encampment Flight Sergeants and Flight Commanders have little time to give **individual** attention to cadets who do not know the basics of being a cadet.

Very Important! Ensure that cadets attending encampment are SAFETY CURRENT before in-processing day. This is a Unit Commander responsibility!

CAPR 62-1, Paragraph 3.d. (7) states:

“3.c.(7) Commanders are responsible to ensure all members within their command do not participate in any CAP activities unless they are compliant with the safety education requirements described in Paragraph 4, *Safety Education Requirements*. Member currency shall be verified prior to participation in CAP activities.”

Safety Currency will be checked during in processing and there may not be any opportunity for non-current members to renew Safety Currency during encampment in-processing.

Squadron Commanders should be proactive in preparing cadets. Please do not fall into the trap of thinking that while at encampment, the cadets are "out of sight - out of mind". They are **your** cadets and their performance reflects on **your** squadron. Provide training classes **and** practice on the following topics.

- CAP Customs and Courtesies (Cadet Leadership manuals and the Respect on Display pamphlet)
 - ◆ Saluting – Who, when, where, how.
 - ◆ Verbal greetings when passing officers (don't stop - keep moving)
- Proper wear of the CAP uniform (CAPM 39-1)
 - ◆ Appropriate jewelry for male and female cadets.
 - ◆ No sunglasses in formation.
- Blues Uniform
 - ◆ Appropriate grade insignia on **both** collars (no CAP cutouts, should be at least a C/Airman since Curry Achievement is required)
 - ◆ Proper placement of insignia (**measure everything!**)
 - ◆ Wear of flight cap (proper placement on head)
 - ◆ Gig Line. (Male and female gig lines are different)
 - ◆ Appropriate style white tee shirts for blues uniform (without tie - V neck, with tie - crew neck is acceptable) Normally, ties are not worn by students. They are optional for graduation banquet.
 - ◆ Purchase and use shirt garters, if possible.
 - ◆ Placement of sleeve creases (Blues crease centered on epaulet)
- BDU Uniform
 - ◆ Appropriate grade insignia on **both** collars (1" from and parallel to "leading edge")
 - ◆ Proper placement of all patches and insignia (**measure everything!**)
 - ◆ Wear of BDU or baseball style caps (proper placement on head)
 - ◆ Blousing BDU trousers (blousing bands are highly recommended, not the ties in the trousers)
 - ◆ Rolling BDU sleeves (expected at encampment)

- ◆ Tucking in combat boot laces (potential tripping hazard)
- ◆ Appropriate tee shirts with BDUs (black, crew neck)
- ◆ Placement of sleeve creases (BDU crease centered on patches)
- Basic drill maneuvers (AFMAN 36-2203 Drill and Ceremonies)
 - ◆ Fall In (automatic Dress Right Dress and automatic Ready Front)
 - ◆ Attention (know the importance of the position and remaining *motionless*)
 - ◆ Parade Rest
 - ◆ At Ease
 - ◆ All facing movements
 - ◆ Present and Order Arms
 - ◆ Flanking movements
 - ◆ To the Rear March
- CAP grooming standards (CAPM 39-1)
 - ◆ *Appropriate haircuts/hairstyles*. These will be checked *before* students are allowed to in process.
- Additional items.
 - ◆ Personal hygiene and self care (basic first aid, cleanliness)
 - ◆ Boot/shoe shining (How to and proper equipment) *NO LIQUID SHOE POLISH!!!!*
 - ◆ Cadets should learn basic ironing skills. They will need to bring irons and portable ironing boards.

In addition to the above training, encampment staff suggests that commanders accomplish the following:

1. Conduct inspections of *all* uniforms complete with insignia, *well before* encampment. If something is wrong, require the cadet to correct the situation. Insist on compliance with *every* standard!
2. Devote part of a regular meeting to determine if cadets have everything on the required items list. Have them pack their bags and bring everything to a meeting just before encampment. Have members of your cadet staff inspect and check everything. This gives the student cadet an opportunity to get everything together early and to discover if anything is missing. Well prior to encampment, stock up on insignia, BDU caps and other difficult to obtain items at your squadron so that you can handle last minute issues. This is also a good time to re-emphasize the importance of compliance with the "no contraband" requirements.
3. Discuss the concept of homesickness with cadets. This will be some cadets' first experience away from home and family. Discuss the resources available at the encampment to help in these situations, such as Chaplain, TAC Officers, and fellow squadron members.
4. Explain to your cadets what it is like to live with little privacy. This can be a quite a shock to some. They also need to understand that they *will not* be able to select roommates nor will they be able to choose upper or lower bunk. This can be a disappointment for cadets who plan for specific roommates.
5. Invite parents of basic cadets to a squadron meeting and brief them on what to expect from encampment. Let parents know that encampment is challenging and is planned to be somewhat overwhelming in the beginning. Tell parents that their sons/daughters must learn the importance of teamwork and time management before they will begin to "learn the system" at encampment. The first few days may be difficult, but most cadets adjust to the routine by day three. *Remind them about haircuts!*

6. Advise parents/guardians that they *may* receive a phone call from a cadet wanting to come home. Advise parents to encourage their son or daughter to stay. Parents should avoid allowing their cadet to come home because they miss their cadet. Often, asking the cadet to stick with it for "one more day" is all that it takes to help them make it all the way through encampment. Usually, less than one percent of cadets leave encampment early.

7. Be certain that parents understand that they should not leave home for any extended period, such as a vacation, unless they designate a family member or friend who will pick up their son or daughter in case they need to leave encampment early for any reason. This alternate emergency contact information *must* be included with encampment application paperwork.

8. Be certain that parents and cadets understand that cadets must be able to manage and monitor their own personal medications that they bring to encampment. Regulations prohibit encampment staff from involvement with administering or monitoring cadet medications.

9. Dietary restrictions and allergies are increasing at encampment. Our food service provider simply cannot supply allergen free foods. We brief cadets that they must ask if a particular food has ingredients to which they might be allergic. They will have to choose food that does not contain a particular allergen.

10. Encourage parents to attend the graduation ceremony and parade. Encampment can be a life-changing event for cadets and, although they are usually ready to go home at the end, they are always incredibly proud of what they have accomplished. The graduation and parade is something they will want to share with parents. Advise them not to forget their cameras!

One final question always comes up for Squadron Commanders. *How long should a cadet be a member before attending encampment?* It depends on the cadet. Age, commitment to CAP, attitude, and maturity are all factors to consider. Encampment attendance is one of the most important factors in cadet retention. Encourage cadets to attend encampment at their *first* opportunity *if* they have the appropriate uniforms, basic skills discussed in this guide, *and* appropriate level of maturity. If a cadet does not have the appropriate level of maturity, give consideration to delaying encampment. Unfortunately, cadets that do not attend encampment at the first opportunity may no longer be members when the next opportunity comes.

Encampment Staff