

# SPECIAL BULLETIN

COVID-19 UPDATE



May 21, 2020

## *National Commander Hails Innovation Opportunities*

*“When the wind of change blows, some people build walls, others build windmills.”  
— Chinese Proverb*

I am so impressed with our folks in Civil Air Patrol, both volunteers and paid staff. You have demonstrated much resilience in handling the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic – both in your personal lives and in your role as volunteer or employee with this amazing organization of ours. You are often on my mind because, well, that’s my job and the reason I rake in these big volunteer bucks!



One of the things that impresses me about you is your innovation. In “steady state,” “normal” times innovation is usually evolutionary in nature. We gradually find ways to do things better. In our type of organization, we rarely see what we could call revolutionary innovation, something that is introduced quickly and has a profound effect on the organization. Civil Air Patrol has one example of revolutionary innovation unfolding now – the replacement of our decades-old Professional Development program with the new Education and Training program and its associated Volunteer University.

Well, we find ourselves in a time where things are neither “normal” nor “steady state.” The old ways of doing things no longer worked. And you rose to the occasion. You have embraced innovation to develop new ways to overcome the COVID-induced barriers to our doing business as usual. Examples abound. Volunteers have embraced virtual meetings to stay engaged and conduct the business of Civil Air Patrol. Virtual tools have been used to conduct professional development courses, with larger classes than could be garnered with in-person offerings. South Dakota Wing held a virtual conference recently with twice as many registrants as they have members of their wing. Members of the national staff have provided waivers, workarounds, virtual classes and compiled online lists of resources, best practices and so on to help our folks to be successful. Our national conference will be a virtual offering, and I am excited at how we will be able to engage our members in new and meaningful ways. Bottom line – well done, Civil Air Patrol innovators!

All this is what I refer to as innovation for the “here and now.” But what about the future of Civil Air Patrol? I believe that COVID-19 will and should fundamentally change how we do things in Civil Air Patrol – for the better! As the saying goes, there is opportunity in chaos. The applecart has been overturned. In many cases how we did business before is NOT how we should do business in the future. We

need innovative solutions to prepare and position Civil Air Patrol to succeed in the future. I believe that as an organization we must embrace a culture of innovation. Stand by for more on the what this culture might look like and how we can achieve it. Also, please note that we will showcase innovation at our 2020 virtual national conference as we harness innovation to sustain excellence.

Yes, these are challenging times. But they are also exciting times. I see bright days ahead for Civil Air Patrol. Want to help? As the Chinese proverb quoted at the beginning of my letter states, let's build windmills, not walls. Let's innovate!

Thank you! Be well. Be safe. Be strong.

**Maj. Gen. Mark Smith**  
National Commander/CEO



CFC Number 24876

**CAP Marketing & Strategic  
Communications**

877-227-9142

[Email](#)

[Website](#)

Connect With Us:

