

**O-1101**  
**CONDUCT WITNESS INTERVIEW**

**CONDITIONS**

You have been informed that there is a person who may have knowledge about the location of the search target. You have paper, pen or pencil, and a CAP Form 106.

**OBJECTIVE**

Politely conduct the interview, via phone or in person, gathering all necessary information without confusing the witness, and prepare a CAP Form 106 with the results of your interview.

**TRAINING AND EVALUATION**

**Training Outline**

1. Witness interviews can be the single most important source of information on a mission. Information from witnesses can help the mission coordinator narrow the search area, allocate search resources, and even locate the target.

a. Witness interviews can occur in four different situations:

- 1) A witness comes up to you and volunteers knowledge.
- 2) Your team has been sent to interview a specific person or persons.
- 3) Your team is sent out to question people in an area where the search target (person or plane) might have been.
- 4) You receive a phone call and take the interview.

b. Witnesses may have all kinds of useful information, for example:

1) If someone has seen the search target alive and well at a given time, it helps the mission coordinator in determining where search target is not, which means less area to search. They may also have seen where the target was headed, or even talked to the target.

2) In the case of a lost plane, someone may have seen the plane in trouble, or seen or heard indications of a crash.

3) Witnesses such as hunters may have seen signs of the search target in the woods.

c. When conducting a witness interview, you are gathering information to fill out a CAP Form 106 (Witness Interrogation Form). This form is designed for lost aircraft, but can be used for lost persons as well. There are a variety of lost person forms available, though none are official CAP. Use these only when directed by your team leader.

d. It is extremely important to get only the facts out of the witness. Witnesses might give false information because of faulty memories or a desire to please the interviewer. Do not offer any information about the incident to the witness during the interview, as this might change their recollections.

e. Whenever possible, use two personnel to conduct an interview. One asks questions and one takes notes. More than two is intimidating, and does not help.

2. To conduct an interview:

a. Prepare yourself. Make sure your uniform is worn correctly. Remove excess field gear, especially anything that might bother the witness, such as large knives. "Clean up" before the interview, combing your hair, washing off any dirt from the field. ENSURE YOUR BREATH IS FRESH -- you want your witness to think about the search target, not your breath.

b. Properly identify yourself as a CAP member. Show the witness your ID card, and some photo ID if he asks. Let the witness know exactly what you are here to do.

c. Conduct the interview in a comfortable location for the interviewee, preferably a living room or family room. This area should also be relatively free of distractions.

d. If the interviewee believes that he or she saw the search objective, then try to take them back to that location. If that is not possible, have a map available.

e. Questioning the witness:

1) First, let the witness tell the story without you interrupting. Take notes. Then go back and ask questions to make sure they cover everything. Control your body language while conducting the interview; witnesses may unconsciously or purposefully change their story if the interviewer shows too much.

2) DON'T LEAD THE WITNESS. Do not volunteer information that might alter their recollection. For example, ask them what color the plane was. Do not ask "Was it blue?" They might agree with you even though they do not really remember that detail.

3) Do not hurry the witness, or press them for information they do not have. If they insist that they do not know something, do not insist that they "make a guess."

4) Show acceptance for what they have to say

5) To probe an area of interest, restate their words or summarize what they said.

6) If the witness says something that does not make sense, ask questions to verify what exactly they witnessed.

7) When interviewing children, be very wary of reliability. Question them thoroughly and ask their parents about the child's reliability, but be tactful since many parents would resent questioning their child's honesty. It is often preferable to interview children without their parents present to avoid parental coaching, but remember to get the parent's permission first.

8) Ask questions that will give you confidence in their answers. In determining the time of the event you might need to ask them how they know the time. In judging flight related items, be especially careful

to determine the interviewee's knowledge of the subject. How did the interviewee know how high the plane was flying? Is the interviewee a pilot, or does he or she have aviation experience?

9) In a good interview, the witness does most of the talking.

10) At the end of the interview, review the answers given. This allows you correct any errors made, and the witness could relate new information not previously discussed.

e. Use the CAP Form 106 as a guide. You may want to show the form to the witness so they are not intimidated by it. You can write directly on the form or take notes on paper. Either way, you will need to prepare a legible copy of the 106 after the interview. You probably will not be able to fill in the form from top to bottom -- the witness might. There are advantages and disadvantages to the interviewee filling out the form. It allows them to express what they mean directly, but could hinder the free flow of information encouraged between the interviewer and the interviewee. The 106 is self explanatory for the most part, but a few of the blocks require comment:

1) Block 9 (Telephone). The telephone number of the witness where he can be contacted later. If he has a work and home number, put them both in block 9.

2) Block 10 (Estimated Age). Estimate the age of the person, do not ask them. Some people do not want to state their age.

3) Block 14 (What occurrence fixed time he heard/saw plane?). If the person said he saw the plane at 1400, ask him how he is sure of that. If he looked at his watch, then it probably was 1400. If he looked at his watch at 1300, and about an hour later he saw the plane, then he might be off on his time estimate. This sort of information is very important to know. If the witness was watching television or listening to the radio it may be easier for the witness to relate what was playing, and you can get at least a rough time of airing from the broadcasting station.

4) Block 17 (About how high above the ground was it?) and Block 18 (About how far away was it at the nearest point?) Most people will not be very accurate at this. Ask them how they figured the height and distance, and write that down as well. For example, they might be able to compare the height of the plane to the height of a nearby building.

5) Block 8 (Address) Sometimes the location where the interviewee lives is different than the location where they witnessed the event. Be sure to note such discrepancies.

6) If you have information that will not fit on the form, make a note at the bottom and write the information on the back of the form.

f. At the end of the interview, thank them for their time. Make sure to give them the phone number to mission base, and ask them to call if they remember something else or find someone else who might know something.

g. Above all, be courteous and professional at all times.

## Additional Information

More detailed information on this topic is available in Chapter 14 of the Ground Team Member and Leader Reference Text.

## Evaluation Preparation

**Setup:** Prepare a CAP Form 106 with the results of a witness interview. You will use this as a script for the test interview. Ensure the student has paper, pen or pencil, and at least one blank Form 106.

**Brief Student:** Tell the student that he has been sent to interview a potential witness. Tell him you will play the role of the witness. Have him start the interview by “knocking on the door” and role-playing from there. Do not volunteer all the information on your “script”-- make the student ask questions to get all the details. At the end of the interview, tell the student that he has 15 minutes to prepare a CAP Form 106 to turn in to the Mission Coordinator.

## Evaluation

<u>Performance measures</u>	<u>Results</u>	
The student:		
1. Is polite and courteous.	P	F
2. Presents a professional appearance.	P	F
3. Properly identifies himself.	P	F
4. Allows the witness to describe what he saw, and then asks questions.	P	F
5. Doesn't lead the witness	P	F
6. Informs the witness how to get in touch with mission base if they remember anything or meet someone else who may be a witness.	P	F
7. Get all information needed for the CAPF 106.	P	F
8. Within 15 minutes after the interview, Legibly completes the 106 (in a format that a mission coordinator could read and use)	P	F
9. The completed 106 contains 90% of the information on the script.	P	F

Student must receive a pass on all performance measures to qualify in this task. If the individual fails any measure, show what was done wrong and how to do it correctly.