

# Gentlemen, Start Your

## CAP Serves as Eye in the Sky for NASCAR Race

By Janet Adams

**A**sk Delaware residents what the Sprint Cup Series is all about and they'll answer "NASCAR" or name their favorite driver. Pulsating TV ads entreat viewers to "Be There!" And they are — in the tens of thousands, filling the highways and local roads with all types of motorized vehicles, from motorcycles to campers and motor homes. Considering that Dover International Speedway, where the race is held, has 120,000 seats, it is easy to imagine

*With these traditional words, "Gentlemen, start your engines," Sprint Cup Series drivers rev up to top speed, jockey for the lead and roar toward the final checkered flag on the last lap of the Dover, Del., track. Hours before the first race car edges into position, Civil Air Patrol members are airborne, monitoring traffic leading into and out of the area.*

the lines of traffic on race day. And, since some fans trickle in a day or two — some even up to a week — ahead of a race, reconnaissance of the area around the speedway begins several days before and after the actual event.

"Sunday events are the busiest," said CAP Delaware Wing Maj. Bob Bracco. "We will have at least four planes in the air at all times on those days. Given the logistics of coordinating pilots, planes and Delaware Department of

Maj. Bob Bracco pilots a CAP plane on race day at Dover International Speedway. The Delaware Department of Transportation relies on CAP to help monitor traffic near the speedway. More than 120,000 race fans attend each NASCAR event held there.



Photo by 1st Lt. Gary Emleigh, Delaware Wing

# Engines



Photo by 1st Lt. Gary Erneigh, Delaware Wing

An aerial shot from a CAP plane shows Dover International Speedway on race day. All CAP aircraft used to monitor traffic for NASCAR events are required to maintain an altitude of 3,000 feet and a radius of three miles of the track to reduce noise and distraction.

Transportation (DELDOT) communication vehicles on the ground and aloft, the job is demanding, but it is also a very welcome community service.”

Since airspace above the track is highly restricted during a race, private planes and helicopters are banned. Participating CAP aircraft are required to maintain an altitude of 3,000 feet and a radius of three miles of the track to reduce noise and distraction. Two CAP planes are generally in the air at one time, with CAP pilots and observers in constant contact with the operations manager of DELDOT’s transportation management center, Gene Donaldson, who is on the scene in a state police helicopter.

Local shopping malls close down for the race from noon to 4 p.m., and people living near Dover generally

try to stay off the roads when major events are scheduled. Still, managing the traffic flow is a major undertaking.

Keeping an eye on traffic patterns for major events is just one of many community services performed by the Delaware Wing, Bracco said. “We also are a part of daily and weekly traffic events such as reporting road blockages from downed trees or a major accident, street and highway flooding, collapsed or washed-out bridges and weekend beach traffic,” he said.

By working closely with DELDOT, first responders can be dispatched promptly and road crews can be summoned to block off accident sites while rerouting traffic if necessary. “CAP also helps DELDOT’s commitment to public safety by sighting and reporting fires of all types, including car, building and field fires,” Bracco said. ▲

*Editor’s Note: Across the country, CAP aircrews assist and support local police and transportation departments in all the above-mentioned areas. If you are attending a major sporting event like a NASCAR race or the Kentucky Derby or happen to be on the scene at a colossal fire or other disaster, look up. There’s probably a CAP “eye in the sky” helping coordinate the multi-agency ground crew response.*