

SAFETY ALERT

Over the past few months the Army has experienced two serious accidents involving M113 tracked vehicles. These accidents have several similarities that deserve discussion: Leader failure, materiel failure, excess speed, rollover training and failure to use existing restraint devices.

Leader failure: Effective leadership at any stage during the accident sequence could have prevented, or mitigated the severity of these accidents. Leaders must ensure the proper performance of PMCS and scheduled service procedures. Leaders must set and enforce standards during mission execution to both enhance mission accomplishment and protect our soldiers.

Materiel failure: Both accidents occurred when the track failed, resulting in the vehicles turning violently and subsequently rolling. These track failures were the result of both **leadership** and **maintenance failures**. Specifically, both M113s had excessively worn track shoe bushings. These bushings keep the track pin in place and prohibit the track pin from making contact with the track shoes. When the bushing fails or becomes worn, the track pin and the shoe create friction, which leads to metal failure. Over time, this metal-on-metal friction exceeds the capabilities of the metal, and the track breaks. The vehicle operator's manual clearly states the PMCS inspection procedures used to determine if track is mission capable. Strict adherence to the TM allows the operator to identify potentially worn bushings and advise the appropriate level of maintenance support.

Speed: Each accident involved a tracked vehicle that was travelling in excess of a posted or mandated speed limit, at 30-35 mph, despite the presence of leaders on the scene. Excess speed increases risk in several ways. Not only does speed decrease the reaction time of the vehicle crew; it increases the momentum of the vehicle. This results in more violent turns and possible vehicle rollover. Further, driving at higher rates of speed adds to the stress exerted against the track. When you couple excess speed with track that is poorly maintained, you have an accident waiting to happen. Once we are at this point and the accident sequence begins, crews must be trained to execute vehicle rollover procedures to standard. Here again, leadership is the key to protecting our soldiers.

Restraint Devices: In each accident, fatalities resulted from a failure to wear the approved seat belts. In both of these accidents, soldiers sustained injuries because they were not wearing seat belts. Reasons for not wearing the seat belts varied, but in each case the individuals were aware of the requirement, and how the seat belt operated. Leaders failed to enforce existing policies.

Leadership at all levels is needed to prevent accidents. Standards are established to ensure safe and efficient mission execution. By failing to train to and enforce established standards, we put our soldiers and mission success at risk. Soldier safety is a leader responsibility...we owe it to our soldiers to do it right!

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