

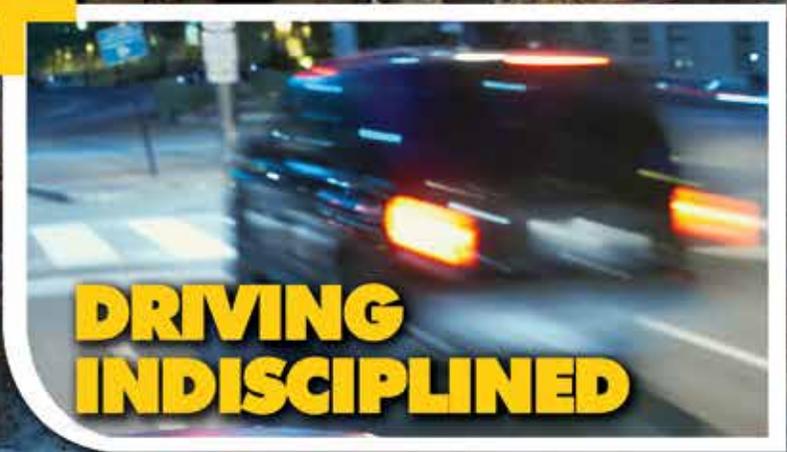
KNOWLEDGE

VOL 6 DECEMBER 2012

OFFICIAL SAFETY MAGAZINE OF THE U.S. ARMY

UNSEEN HAZARDS

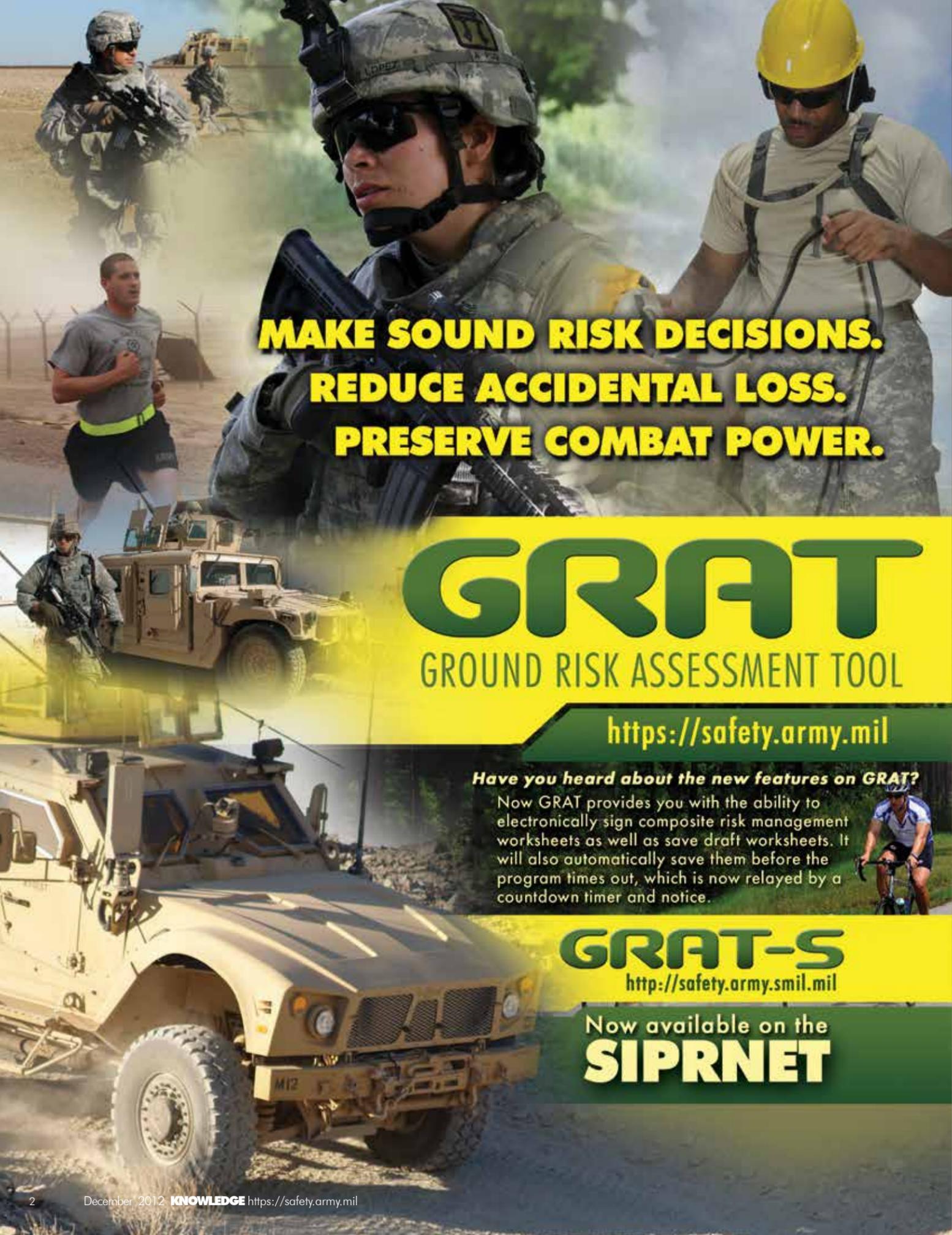
- MOTORCYCLE TRAINING
- LAKE EFFECT SNOW
- ELECTRICAL SHOCKS



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U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

ARMY SAFE IS ARMY STRONG

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Mission statement: The United States Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center (USACR/Safety Center) supports our Army by collecting, analyzing and communicating actionable information to assist Leaders, Soldiers, Families and Civilians in preserving/protecting our Army's combat resources.

We welcome your feedback. Please email comments to safe.knowledge@conus.army.mil.

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Knowledge provides a forum for Soldiers, Leaders and safety professionals to share best practices and lessons learned and maintain safety awareness. The views expressed in these articles are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Army, Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. Contents are specifically for accident prevention purposes only. Photos and artwork are representative and do not necessarily show the people or equipment discussed. Reference to commercial products does not imply Army endorsement. Unless otherwise stated, material in this magazine may be reprinted without permission; please credit the magazine and author.

Soldiers -

This is a wonderful time of year for our Army Family. You and your loved ones have fought hard and done well this past year, and you deserve all the joy this magical season can bring. Enjoy your time together, play it safe in everything you do, and continue looking out for your battle buddies during the break. Often, all it takes is a phone call from a friend to remind someone they're needed. Also remember your brothers and sisters in the fight overseas and their Families here at home. No distance is too great to let them know you care.

Happy holidays, and I look forward to a wonderful 2013 with you! <<

Timothy J. Edens

TIMOTHY J. EDENS
Brigadier General, USA
Director of Army Safety



FAMILIES FIRST

INEVITABLY, we always LOSE a few SOLDIERS to negligent discharges and motorcycle ACCIDENTS around the time of the HOLIDAY exodus. CUT the RISK now by making FAMILIES part of the SOLUTION.



My Family loves the holidays. Any reason to dress up, decorate and invite people over is cause for excitement in our house, and I can't help but get caught up in the joy of the season too. Those closest to me have supported me through numerous deployments and truly are my strength, but we aren't unique. All across our Army, Families are sustaining their Soldiers and each other with the same determination that has made my career possible. They are, each and every one, truly remarkable!

One of the things that's surprised me during my visits to installations is the enthusiasm spouses and other Family members bring to safety. I've either led or participated in a good number of spouses' briefings now, and I'm still amazed at how quickly wives and husbands "get" the safety message. This is stuff we've been drilling into Soldiers'

heads for years, yet it's the Families who pick up on it the fastest. The problem isn't an intellectual disparity — it's tunnel vision.

Sometimes, Soldiers are so used to doing what they do, they can't see the hazards behind it. Even though spouses are removed from the work environment, they still glean enough from what their Soldiers say

to recognize the risk. They also have unmatched personal insight into their Soldiers' off-duty lives. If you have a Soldier who drives or rides recklessly, you can bet his or her spouse knows about it and probably feels powerless to stop it. You need to give them the power by involving them in your unit safety programs.

I understand the reluctance of some leaders to take this step. We've come a long way in recognizing the importance of Families, but institutional barriers still exist in wholly integrating them into the Army's day-to-day operations. There's no reason for that to be a problem with safety, however. Families are who we should naturally be turning to in addressing off-duty fatalities. They have the access and the time with their Soldiers to really make a difference, given

the opportunity by leaders and safety professionals in the field.

A few years ago, the USACR/ Safety Center released the Family Engagement Kit, a compilation of resources and multimedia products designed for Family readiness groups, quality of life representatives and Army chaplains. It's been updated every year since then but hasn't gotten the same visibility as some of our other products, which has done our Families a disservice. Without fail, the spouses and Family members we brief are enthusiastic and eager for a kit of their own when they learn about it. But they shouldn't have to hear about the FEK or any other safety tools from me; they should be getting their information from you.

Here's your chance to fill that

gap. This month, we'll release the fiscal 2013 FEK update at <https://safety.army.mil>. That's just in time for the holidays and allows you ample opportunity to brief your Families on off-duty safety. Many well-meaning spouses will spend a lot of money to make their Soldiers happy with expensive gifts like motorcycles or handguns, without giving a second thought to the training and experience required to enjoy them safely. Inevitably, we always lose a few Soldiers to negligent discharges and motorcycle accidents around the time of the holiday exodus. Cut the risk now by making Families part of the solution.

We closed fiscal 2012 with the second-lowest accidental fatalities on record — that's irrefutable proof of the amazing job each of

you does every day. Remember you don't have to do it alone; your Soldiers' Families will be happy and eager to help you out. Involving them will take your safety program to the next level, and our Soldiers deserve nothing less.

I wish you all a happy, healthy and safe holiday! <<<

Army Safe is Army Strong!

Rick Stidley

RICK STIDLEY
Command Sergeant Major
U.S. Army Combat
Readiness/Safety Center

After reading the article "How Do You Shoot Yourself?" in the May 2012 issue of this magazine, I thought my weapons-handling experiences might also be useful to the safety community. If that seems a little narrow-minded and opinionated, it probably is — but that's OK. I'm a former installation range officer, so weapons safety was my job.

HOW I DIDN'T SHOOT MYSELF

JAMES A. REDDICK
Deputy to the Garrison Commander
Yakima Training Center
Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

Let's cut to the chase ... no one has ever been shot with an unloaded gun. A bang is always conclusive proof that a gun was loaded. Firearms are discharged in one of only two ways: intentionally or negligently. Once the bang happens, it's out of your control. This article is about how to control your firearm.

I have a muzzle magnet. As best as I can tell, it's located just in front of my navel. Firearm muzzles just seem to swing mindlessly toward it whenever I'm in or near a group of shooters. When a muzzle is carelessly pointed at me, I immediately say something and the offender usually gets upset when I imply that they unsafely handled their weapons. They defensively tell me that they know it's unloaded, they just checked it yesterday and ask, "Do you think I'd do something that stupid?" And my retort is always, "Well, I don't know if it's unloaded and I don't care when you checked it. I control the muzzle of my firearm and expect the same from others!"

Try this yourself. On the range, stay aware and notice how many other people point guns at you. Controlling the muzzle of your firearm is an "always" requirement, so it doesn't matter if it's on duty or off duty. A negligent discharge will result in the least damage when the muzzle is pointed in the safest direction possible. If you witness someone mishandling a weapon, speak up! And stay cool when someone

reminds you to control your muzzle.

Guns fire when the trigger is pulled; triggers get pulled when fingers are on them. If you don't want your gun to fire, don't have your finger on the trigger. I intentionally keep my finger off the trigger when I don't want to fire it, and so should you.

"The safety is on," is an excuse that covers the gamut of firearm handling sins. That excuse doesn't give me a warm, fuzzy feeling. To me, that is kind of like saying that you are driving drunk, but the cruise control is set for the speed limit. Remember, one sensible action doesn't negate the foolish or stupid ones. I don't really trust mechanical safeties. I use them religiously, though, because they work most of the time. What I trust is the "safety" between my ears and keeping the muzzle pointed in a safe direction.

Being somewhat of an oddball, I read directions. I know how to operate my firearms — how to disassemble them, clean them and reassemble them. I practice doing those things and I keep the muzzle pointed safely while doing so. When I get to the range or a hunting area, I know I can load and use my firearm safely. How many tries did it take you to figure out what that little metal tab did on your Benelli? Which of the umpteen different trigger systems does your SIG have? All of that handy information is in the instruction booklet.

My guns are unloaded when they're not in use. It's easy to load them when

DID YOU KNOW?

Negligent discharges occur on and off duty and can happen to anyone.

- When on leave, a Soldier was injured while shooting cans and bottles with a revolver. When he was done shooting, as he attempted to de-cock the pistol, the hammer slipped from his thumb and slammed forward, discharging a .22-caliber round into his thigh.
- While on duty, a Soldier who was cleaning his weapon shot another Soldier in the leg.

Awareness of safety rules and compliance with appropriate procedures helps prevent accidents. When handling weapons on the range, in combat or off duty, personnel must be aware of and use proper procedures to avoid negligent discharges and other accidents. The Range & Weapons Safety Toolbox is a centralized collection of online resources for managing range operations and safe weapons handling. The toolbox hosts various references and materials, including publications, training support packages, multimedia products, ammunition and explosives information, and safety messages and alerts. By using this toolbox, Soldiers and leaders can minimize risks and sustain combat readiness. Visit <https://safety.army.mil/rangeweaponssafety> (AKO login required) for more information.

needed. Do you need guns loaded and ready in combat? Yes, indeed. How about when you're on the firing line at the range? Certainly. When the pistol is under the seat of the pickup bouncing around? When the shotgun is in the closet? When the rifle is next to the bed? You decide. You have to make that decision based upon your personal situation and the amount of risk you can accept. However, the jurors may have a different viewpoint. So will the cops, your spouse and mom. You need to practice loading quickly and safely so it becomes a skill you can count on.

There is no booze around when I'm shooting. This, too, is an always rule. Yes, beer is also booze. If you've had any alcohol, don't mess with your guns

at all. If your friends have been drinking, discourage them from shooting or even handling their guns. Shoot completely sober, then put the guns away, relax and enjoy your beverage of choice.

Guns are expensive. Most of mine have custom work, optical sights and other accessories. I keep them locked in a safe, and I spin the dial every time I close it. Properly secured firearms are safer for, and from, everyone.

Some of you may want to carry a concealed handgun, as I have done for over 30 years. Concealed carry of firearms for self-protection is more prevalent today than ever; 49 of 50 states currently allow concealed carry in some manner. I offer this advice: before you accept the risks

and responsibilities that accrue with concealed carry, find a good defense lawyer, knowledgeable law enforcement officer and local prosecutor to discuss your responsibilities and the likely repercussions from actually using that firearm. If you choose to exercise those rights, you need to do so with full knowledge. Military bases do not allow concealed carry — so don't even think about it!

I've found that (for me) the best way to reinforce safe gun handling skills is to shoot. There are competitive events for almost every shooting interest. The United States Practical Shooting Association caters to action-oriented, very competitive people; International Defensive Pistol Association matches

center around self-defense scenarios; Cowboy Action Shooting is mostly just for fun; and trap, skeet, sporting clays and formal rifle and pistol competitions stress pure marksmanship. These competitive events are open to everyone and emphasize safe gun handling, familiarity with your firearms and enjoying the shooting sports. Our Army marksmanship unit competes, and so can you. "Newbies" are always welcome. Get out there and make some noise. Safe shooting!◀

ARE YOU A SHARPSHOOTER?

The Range & Weapons Safety Toolbox contains information and tools related to the safe handling of privately owned weapons, in addition to resources to establish and maintain effective range and weapons safety programs with military weapons.

**RANGE & WEAPONS
SAFETY TOOLBOX**

**CHECK IT
OUT TODAY!**

<https://safety.army.mil/rangeweaponssafety>

LICENSE TO FAIL

JOSEPH FENTRESS
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Kansas City, Mo.

Some motorcyclists only go through safety training to get their license and drive on post. However, once off the installation, they seem to forget the rules and fail to practice the skills that might save their lives. When riding a motorcycle, even the smallest mistakes can be life threatening, so risk management and situational awareness are crucial.

It was the first warm weekend of spring during my senior year in high school. The northern Virginia winter was bad that year, and the heavy snows we'd been getting had only recently disappeared. With winter behind us, my best friend, Seth, was eager to get his Kawasaki Ninja sport bike on the road again.

The year before, Seth taught me how to ride it in the school parking lot, but we only covered the basics — how to shift, what brakes are where and how to use the blinker. I had only driven it on the road once, and I remember being both very nervous and excited at the same time. I thought that bike was the coolest thing in the world and wanted to learn to ride.

As Seth and I were making plans for the day, my brother called and told me he had just bought a new Honda scooter. He'd wanted a motorcycle but did not know how to ride one. The scooter was more comfortable for him because he didn't need to shift gears, it was street legal and could get up to 55 mph. Seth suggested my brother stop by so we could all go for a ride.

Within an hour, we were all together on a cul-de-sac near another friend's house. My brother and Seth took off first, and I could hear them laughing as they drove down the street. About 30 minutes later, they returned so I could have a turn. I was nervous, but being 17 and having my peers around, I didn't take the time to consider the risks involved.

I hopped on the motorcycle, and my brother and I took off down the street. About 100 yards down the road, there was a sharp turn and, before I knew it, I was sliding on the ground. Even though I was only going about 30 mph, I slid for what seemed like 20 yards, barely missing a mailbox. The Bermuda shorts, tennis shoes with no socks and T-shirt I was wearing didn't do much to protect me from the road rash that took off most of the skin on my elbows, forearms, hands and knees. Oddly enough, the helmet — the only appropriate personal protective equipment I was wearing — never hit the ground.

With the adrenaline pumping, I immediately hopped to my feet and picked up the Kawasaki like it was a Huffy. I then rolled it back to the cul-de-sac and apologized to Seth profusely for totaling his prized possession. Like a good friend, he was more concerned about my condition. I told them I felt fine and didn't need to go to the ER. They then pointed out the thick stream of blood running down the driveway from my right shoe. I decided I might need to get that checked out.

The injury was extensive. The brake pedal had scooped a chunk of flesh out of my leg and scraped the bone. Because it wasn't a cut, the doctors couldn't sew it together. I had to spend nearly a month in Walter Reed Army Medical Center undergoing skin grafts and preventive infection procedures due to the scraped bone.

There are several lessons I learned from my accident — the first being proper training is an absolute must. Had I taken the time to get trained and licensed, I likely could have avoided this accident. Without proper training, you only have a license to fail. Proper PPE is also important and probably would have kept me out of the hospital. A long-sleeved shirt or jacket, pants and gloves would have helped prevent the road rash, and heavy leather boots would have helped me avoid the most painful injury I have suffered in my life. Finally, I should have considered the environment I was riding in before I got on the bike. Because the snows had only recently ended, there was still an abundance of sand and salt on the street. When I drove through that sand in the curve, it was a millisecond ride to the asphalt. That's a ride I hope to never take again.◀◀

Most aviators have experienced quick weather changes before, during and after a flight. Those experiences, both good and bad, can affect the way you fly for the rest of your career. I'd flown in the clouds with zero visibility during flight school and was grateful for the instructor pilot in the next seat. I'd also flown medical evacuation missions in low-visibility conditions in Iraq. However, nothing had prepared me for the phenomenon known to forecasters and residents around the Great Lakes as "lake effect" snow.

When the COWIN BLOWS

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 ROBERT KEYES
Company G, 2nd Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment
Kansas Army National Guard
Topeka, Kan.

We'd been back from Iraq for eight months and were transferring aircraft, one at a time, to Fort Drum, N.Y., to exchange aircraft going through reset. We were on the final leg of our trip to Fort Drum, where we'd take a day off before flying back to Kansas. Up until this point, we'd had an uneventful trip. The weather had been great,

there hadn't been any complications and we were looking forward to a trouble-free mission.

But that was about to change.

We were within 30 miles of Fort Drum, flying around the south shoreline of Lake Ontario, when we noticed the visibility dropping off. What had been almost 10 miles of

clear weather rapidly shrunk down to five miles as we flew. We tuned in the weather information for Watertown airport — our planned alternative to Fort Drum — trying to figure where the weather was coming from and where it was going. With weather information from both

Watertown and Fort Drum airfield, we were hoping to sidestep into clear air and continue. However, the more information we received, the more confused we became. Both airfields, which were only about 15 miles apart, were reporting 10 miles visibility and no ceiling.

As we discussed our options, visibility and ceilings continued to worsen. We slowed down and decided to continue under visual flight rules, staying below the decreasing ceilings to avoid icing conditions and potential aircraft maintenance problems. We contacted Fort

Drum tower to advise them of the situation and ask for weather updates. The response we got was confusing, with the controller claiming three miles visibility and 1,500 foot ceilings. Any attempt to speed up was frightening and several times we nearly out-flew our visibility.



Only by staying low and slow were we able to see and navigate appropriately. Fortunately, with coordination from the tower (and no other traffic in the area) we spotted the airfield from two miles out and landed safely, successfully completing our mission.

LAKE EFFECT SNOW

According to The Weather Channel, "Lake effect snows occur when a mass of sufficiently cold air moves over a body of warmer water, creating an unstable temperature profile in the atmosphere. As a result, clouds build over the lake and eventually develop into snow showers and squalls as they move downwind. The intensity of lake effect snow is increased when higher elevations downwind of the lake force the cold, snow-producing air to rise even further."

Lessons Learned

After we landed, we talked with local pilots and the airfield crew and they explained the lake-effect weather phenomenon. No one had briefed us about this before the mission, so we were caught totally unawares. As it turns out, often during the winter months, a

cold wind blows across the warm water in Lake Ontario and causes an inland rain or fog to settle on parts of the coastline. Even with prior planning, weather updates and local information, crews can find themselves unexpectedly caught in bad weather. Add to that the fact the information observers provide from the

ground may not accurately reflect what is in the air and you have the makings for a truly hairy flight. The best advice I can suggest if you're unexpectedly caught in rapidly decreasing weather conditions is to follow standard operating procedures, slow down, communicate effectively as a

crew and use risk management to decide your best course of action. Others may question the decisions you made and some will argue that you could have done things differently. However, it's a lot easier to play armchair quarterback on the ground than to be in the cockpit facing danger in the air.◀

COMMANDERS AND SAFETY OFFICERS!

Deploying? Already Deployed?

Want to prevent accident trends specific to your unit's warfighting platform? It's all on one slide and easy to find.

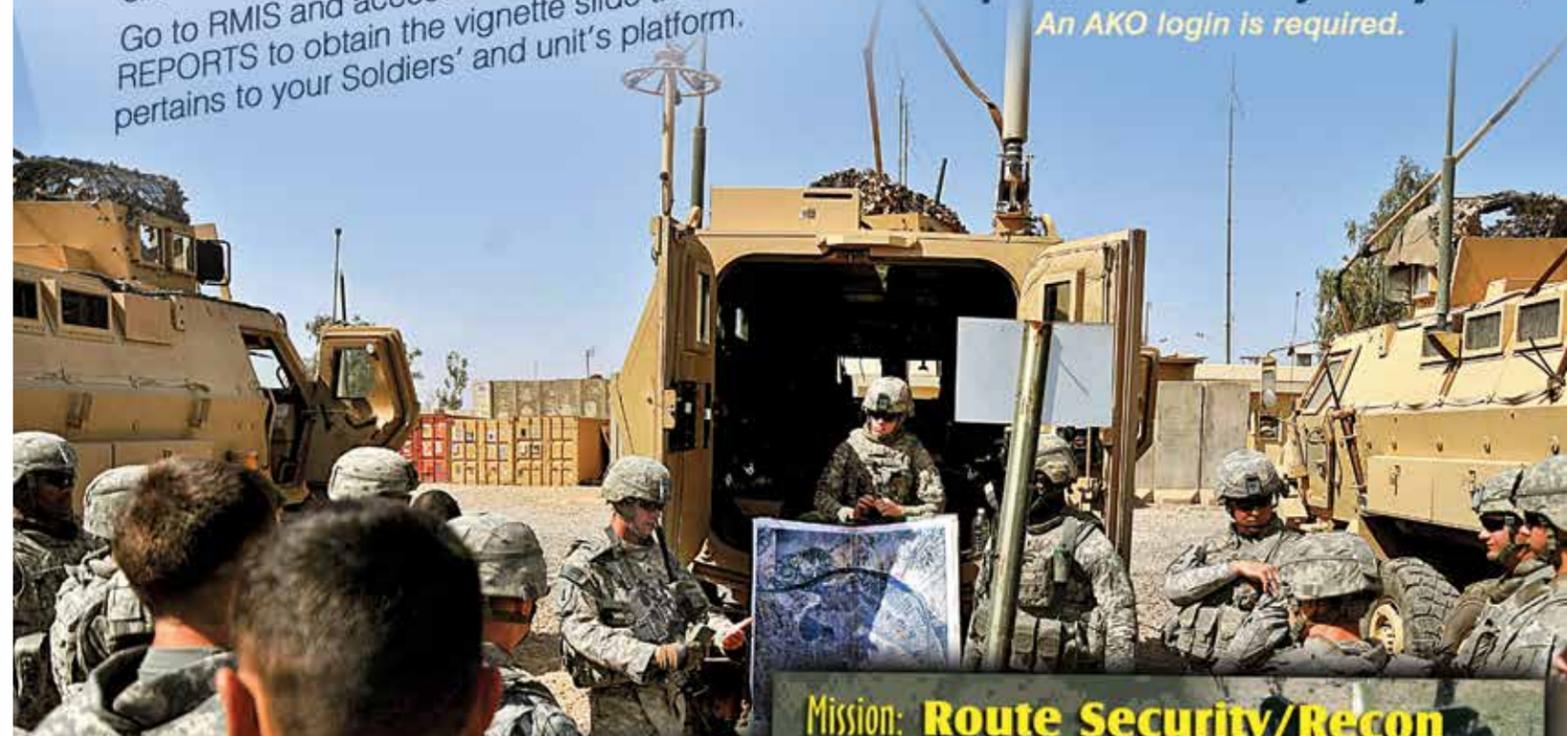
Go to RMIS and access PRELIMINARY CAI REPORTS to obtain the vignette slide that most pertains to your Soldiers' and unit's platform.

RMIS

Quick Search

<https://rmis.safety.army.mil/>

An AKO login is required.



Mission: Off Duty

Hazards

- Driving while fatigued from a 14.5 hour duty day followed by late night activities
- Failure to use seat belts
- Excessively worn tires

Results

- One Soldier fatality

Controls

- Educate Soldiers on the increased risk of driving while fatigued
- Continue to reinforce the requirements & benefits of using vehicle seat belts
- Establish & execute appropriate inspection programs

Mission: Route Security/Recon

Hazards

- Materiel Failure- Engine
- Tactical threat
- Failure to follow published emergency procedures

Results

- Aircraft destroyed
- One Soldier permanently disabled
- One Soldier seriously injured

Controls

- During mission planning evaluate aircraft emergency responses in light of the tactical threat
- Ensure crews are familiar with the possible consequences of choosing not to follow published emergency procedures



Mission Essential

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 4 MARC ASSUMPCAQ
U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center
Fort Rucker, Ala.

In today's fast-paced environment, personnel may take for granted the fact that vehicles and equipment are functional whenever they're needed. However, without thorough inspections and routine maintenance, this reliability won't last. The effects of neglecting assigned equipment include reductions in vehicle performance, safety and other potential problems. If a vehicle is rendered non-mission capable, a weapon is improperly assembled or a radio's batteries are dead, the success of a unit's mission and the safety of personnel are threatened.

As leaders, it's our responsibility to ensure our Soldiers have the resources and fully mission capable equipment to accomplish their missions while in garrison and on the battlefield. We're also charged with safeguarding our Soldiers. Whether preparing for a field training exercise or deployment, preventive maintenance checks and services, pre-combat checks and pre-combat inspections are key components that help

units successfully execute missions. When planning, allocate sufficient time for PMCS and PCIs before every mission; don't take these detailed checks lightly. Supervisors should enforce the checks listed in the equipment's technical manual. Doing so will ensure every individual in the formation is safe and that equipment is operational. Supervisors should plan inspections well in advance and be sure to allocate time

for corrective actions should they be needed. Technical inspections validate that scheduled or unscheduled services have been performed. Additionally, they may help prevent unnecessary accidents. Only qualified personnel should perform technical inspections prior to a repair or turn-in of unserviceable equipment. Comprehensive checks and inspections must be our No. 1 tool to combat those twin enemies against safety — shortcuts and complacency. It's sometimes human nature for people to get comfortable in their surroundings and begin to overlook the application of risk management. Additionally, operators need to be familiar with their

equipment technical manuals and checklists. The standards established to conduct PMCS, PCCs and PCIs will determine the unit's ability to perform safely in any environment. Individual Soldiers are responsible for ensuring — through their PCCs — that all equipment needed for the mission is available. In turn, leaders should verify PCIs are conducted and corrective actions are taken on equipment identified as unserviceable. Equipment operators and maintenance personnel must realize safety inspections can be one of the most important accident prevention tools in a unit's safety program. Using trained inspectors to identify faults or malfunctions before an accident occurs will ensure our Army remains safe and strong. An effective inspection program is a force multiplier

“Inspectors **SHOULD KNOW THE STANDARD**, be **TRAINED** on the equipment they will **INSPECT** and be able **TO REFERENCE** the proper **TECHNICAL MATERIALS.**”

that sustains the unit's readiness posture while simultaneously boosting the unit's morale. Usually, inspections primarily focus on finding and recording unsafe conditions. Often ignored are other causes of incidents, such as unsafe actions and systems defects. To have a successful inspection program, supervisors need to invest their time. Prior planning, preparation and training for inspectors are important. Inspectors should know the standard, be trained on the equipment they will inspect and be able to reference the proper technical materials.

Personal involvement, leadership engagement and supervision at all levels are ways to measure the overall effectiveness of a safety program. Leaders must insist on adherence to established safety rules and standards, while continually evaluating their mission for innovative preventive measures that will enhance the safety program. Safety programs are ever-changing, and a leader's ability to adapt and properly manage a program will help protect our nation's most precious asset — our Soldiers.◀

AT A GLANCE

Conducting proper inspections on our vehicles and equipment will enable the Army to reduce the number of accidents in our units. Most units have locally produced inspection forms tailored to their needs. Below are some areas of inspection for consideration:

- Preventive maintenance checks and services are conducted on all equipment
- DA Form 5988-E completed and logged
- Vehicle is dispatched
- -10 technical manual is present
- Basic Issue Items are complete and present

- Driver is properly licensed
- Equipment is loaded according to the load plan and vehicle load plan is verified
- First aid kit is complete and present
- Night-vision devices are cleaned and operational
- Fire Suppression Systems are functional and handheld extinguishers are serviceable
- Cargo is secured and tied down
- Prime movers and trailer brake systems are properly connected and operational
- Risk management conducted and risk assessment form

is signed by the approving authority

For a more detailed checklist of equipment inspection items, please visit the Driver's Training Toolbox at <https://safety.army.mil/drivertrainingtoolbox>. If you're looking for materials to set up, maintain or improve your unit's driver training program and ensure the safety of your Soldiers and equipment, then check out this toolbox. It's a web-based product and repository of driver training resources aimed to assist leaders, commanders, master drivers and instructors.

In a FLASH

CHRISTINA SHORT
200th Military Police Command
Fort Meade, Md.

Author's note: The names of the individuals mentioned in this story have been changed to protect their privacy.

In 2001, I was a specialist living in a three-bedroom, two-story condo in Hinesville, Ga. My roommates, Lee and Eric, were also specialists and enjoyed having friends over after work and for pre-clubbing get-togethers on weekends. Every Friday, the guys went out, had a good time and, for the most part, came home when the club closed. On Saturdays, they would get up, wash their cars or run errands, and then get ready to go to the club all over again.

Shortly after we moved in together, my relationship with Eric progressed to more than "just friends." We were spending time together outside of the house on Saturdays before the guys went to the club. I didn't enjoy going to the club, so I usually stayed home. Eric always came home, so it didn't bother me that he spent those nights with his friends. Everything was going well for us until one night I will never forget.

It was mid-June and, as usual, Eric and I went out together on a Saturday. By this time, we had picked up a fourth, temporary roommate, Eric's squad leader, Kyle, who was in the process of getting out of the Army. When Eric and I got home that evening, Kyle asked if I was going to the club with them. He didn't know that I didn't go to the club, but since he asked, I agreed to join them and got dressed. However, Eric didn't want me tagging along with the group, and we got into a huge argument in front of our friends. Angry, I changed my clothes and stayed home.

Sometime after midnight, Lee came home from the club, left again

and returned for good at 2 a.m. Kyle strolled in about 3:30 a.m., but Eric still hadn't come home. I was pretty angry that he was so late, especially after our earlier argument. When 6:30 a.m. arrived and Eric was still out, I figured I would get even by not being there when he finally came home. I got dressed, gathered my laundry and headed to post.

As I entered a curve near Fort Stewart's main gate, I saw a Pontiac Grand Am similar to Eric's flipped upside down on the grassy area on the side of the road. The driver's side of the vehicle showed heavy damage from where it had struck a tree. When I got to the gate, I asked the guards if they knew what had happened or the identity of the owner of the car. They told me I should go to the MP station. There I was told to go to the Criminal Investigation Division office. Of course, no one was at the CID office, and I was starting to feel like I was being given the runaround. I decided I'd better go home.

When I got home, Kyle was gone. Fearing the worst, I ran upstairs and busted into Lee's room. I told him to

“A **LOT** of **PEOPLE** were forever **AFFECTED** by the bad **CHOICES** Eric made that day, and we must **LEARN** from his **MISTAKES**. Whether you’re the driver or a passenger, **ALWAYS** wear your **SEAT BELT**. It can **SAVE** your **LIFE.**”

get up, get dressed and come with me to Eric’s battalion. When we got there, I saw Kyle and knew what I was about to hear was not going to be good. Kyle told me Eric was dead and his passenger, whom he was giving a ride home, was in the hospital.

I later learned that after they left the club, Eric, Kyle and some other friends had gone to Hardee’s to eat. Afterward, as Eric was taking a friend back to the barracks, he got into a street race with another car. As Eric approached a curve near the main gate doing about 70 mph, his steering wheel locked up and he was unable to maintain control of the car. He then struck a tree and flipped over.

Eric didn’t drink, so alcohol wasn’t a factor in the accident — but his negligence was. He had received a recall notice from Pontiac in reference to the steering wheel locking, but he never took his car to the dealership to have it checked out. Another thing he didn’t do was wear his seat belt. He was ejected from the vehicle and died on impact.

Eric would have turned 21 that year. He left behind a 1-year-old daughter, as well as his mother, brother and a lot of friends who

loved him dearly. Eric lost his life because of indiscipline — he got caught up in a street race, didn’t wear his seat belt and failed to properly maintain his vehicle by not correcting a known manufacturing defect. Some people believe that when it’s your time to go, it’s just your time to go. However, I believe it’s only your time to go if you were doing everything right and still couldn’t prevent it.

A lot of people were forever affected by the bad choices Eric made that day, and we must learn from his mistakes. Whether you’re the driver or a passenger, always wear your seat belt. It can save your life. Also, make sure you take care of your car, fixing any defects as soon as you become aware. Life is short. Don’t rush it because it could all be over in a flash.◀

Editor’s note: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Recall Campaign number 98V320 warned that some 1999 Pontiac Grand Am automobiles might not have their steering wheel retaining nut properly tightened. As a result, the steering wheel could come loose from the steering shaft, increasing the risk of a crash. When owners brought their vehicles to dealerships for inspection, the steering wheel retaining nut was to be checked for correct tightness and tightened if necessary.

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A Shocking Experience

The holiday season has arrived, and the time for decorating is in full swing. Most of us trim the tree, hang the lights and hook up our air-filled, oversized Santa, Rudolph or whatever else we have in our arsenal of decorations. Here is the problem; we forget that our old friend electricity powers most — if not all — of our holiday decorations. What we fail to realize is most outlets are generally 15-20 amps, so overloading them is easy.

WES COLLINS
Twentynine Palms, Calif.

Overloaded outlets increase the potential for shock or electrocution, so here are some helpful hints to keep you safe this holiday season:

- Inspect all electrical decorations for defects or damage. The smallest fray in an electrical cord can have devastating consequences.
- Ensure all bulbs used for lighting decorations are operational and in place. The empty socket in a string of lights exposes users to the potential of electrical shock.
- Daisy chaining (plugging multiple electrical sources

in sequence) can cause electrical connections to overheat, resulting in a fire. Following the manufacturer's recommendation is the best course of action to alleviate the potential for overload.

One golden rule I live by is to use heavy-duty extension cords designed to carry the intended load. I never use those light-duty cords — you know, the little flat ones sold for as little as

\$1.29 at hardware stores. These cords can heat up quickly when they're overloaded and are not good for home decorating.

So, go forth this holiday season and enjoy it without the worries of an electrical fire. Remember, electricity is dangerous and demands respect, so give it the recognition it deserves.◀◀

DID YOU KNOW?

Based on data from the National Fire Protection Association and the U.S. Fire Administration, an estimated 240 home fires involving Christmas trees and another 150 involving holiday lights and other decorative lighting occur each year. Together, these fires result in 21 deaths and \$25.2 million in direct property damage. For more information on winter and holiday safety, visit the NFPA website at <http://www.nfpa.org/>. Protect yourself and your loved ones this holiday season.



UNSEEN HAZARDS

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 4 KRAIG M. LANG
 C Company, 4th Battalion, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (A)
 Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

Let's face it, we aviators are can-do people. When confronted with adversity, we find a way to accomplish our mission. However, even with the best of intentions, we occasionally do things we later wish we had done differently.



At about 2 p.m. on Nov. 2, 2006, I gathered the Kiowa Warrior pilots of 6th Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, Fort Wainwright, Alaska, for a pre-mission briefing. I was an OH-58D(R) standardization pilot/instrument examiner, and we planned to conduct winter environmental training in day, night and night-vision goggle modes. Having previously completed the necessary academics, we updated the

risk assessment and mission briefing forms to reflect crew changes. We also conducted a collective preflight of the aircraft, highlighting cold weather considerations. I departed for the day portion of the qualifications shortly afterward and returned about 4 p.m. as planned. However,

I saw there wasn't going to be enough

snow on the ground for everyone to get quality training.

I began the night and NVG portion of the training at 5:30 p.m., and an hour later, the second pilot entered the cockpit so we could begin his training. We conducted several required maneuvers at the airfield before departing the traffic pattern at 7 p.m. We then flew to a training area north of Ladd Army Airfield to conduct terrain flight and confined area

operations. While hunting for snow to land in, the pilot identified an SUV that appeared to be stuck on its side. I assumed the controls and maneuvered the aircraft to get a better look. We saw a light and observed people inside the SUV. Knowing that sub-zero temperatures posed an immediate danger and seeing the condition of the SUV, I decided to land and assess the situation and render appropriate assistance as needed.

I chose a flat open area along a trail 50 meters behind the SUV, which had broken through the ice, and executed an approach and landing. I aligned the aircraft with vehicle tracks on a trail in the landing zone and placed the skids

parallel with the ruts, facing the vehicle. Two occupants got out of the SUV. I told the pilot to exit the aircraft and determine if they needed assistance. He opened the right cockpit door and was swinging his leg out when the aircraft settled to its left-rear side. I felt feedback in the pedals and believed the tail rotor contacted something. I'd barely announced that I was shutting down the engine when the aircraft began rapidly settling and listing to the left. The ice below began breaking under the skids and the aircraft sank into a muskeg water hole. Despite my best efforts to prevent it, the rotor blades struck the ground and severed the drivetrain. After the blades stopped, the pilot

jettisoned the right door and exited, turning to assist me as I was now submerged in water up to my left armpit. The left chin bubble had broken while settling through the ice, causing water to fill the cockpit.

I completed the emergency shutdown and, as I climbed across the cockpit and out of the aircraft, the pilot immediately pulled out his survival radio and emergency strobe. Using the "Guard" frequency, he contacted a Chinook flying in the airfield traffic pattern. The Chinook immediately responded and began orbiting over the accident scene. As they did, they relayed the situation and location to air traffic control, which sent crash rescue to the scene. I used my cellphone to call our squadron staff duty officer to initiate the pre-accident plan. Due to being wet and extremely cold, my cellphone stopped working and I could no longer assist in the recovery efforts. At minus 18 F, I quickly began to suffer the onset of hypothermia. My required

additional cold weather survival equipment was on board the aircraft, trapped beneath the ice. Emergency services arrived on scene within 20 minutes and immediately treated us for hypothermia. We were transported to the hospital for evaluation after the accident scene was secured.

While at the hospital, I reflected on my actions. Could I have helped the individuals stranded in the SUV without having to land like the CH-47 that rendered aid to us? Would I have still landed?

My answer is yes to both. But with regards to landing, I would've approached in a more patient and deliberate manner, aware that not all hazards are obvious. A pilot's desire to help in an emergency must be tempered by understanding the risks involved and applying the necessary mitigation. Even good deeds need to be checked with careful counsel. If we ride to the rescue without mitigating the risks, the next rescue mission may be to save us.◀◀



STRAP IN AND SURVIVE

CHRIS HAIR
TRADOC Safety Office
Fort Monroe, Va.

Do you think seat belts, like leather upholstery, are optional in your vehicle? I can tell you from a personal experience they're not optional — they're essential.

A few years ago, my brother was attending college in a big city when he and a friend decided to go out for a night on the town. Knowing his friend would be drinking, my brother offered to be the designated driver that night. It was a good thing he did.

As they were heading home, another driver ran a stop sign and drove directly into my

brother's path. All my brother could do was hit the brakes, slowing the car from 30 to 20 mph as they struck the other vehicle.

My brother and his friend were both in the front seat, and the impact threw both of them forward. My brother was restrained by his seat belt, but his unbelted

friend went head-first into the windshield.

When the car stopped, my brother had a minor cut on his forehead, which required a few stitches to close. His friend, however, didn't fare so well and suffered serious head injuries. He spent more than a month in the hospital and never fully recovered.

Who'd have thought that wearing a seat belt during a 20-mph collision would spell the difference

between a minor injury and a permanent disability?

Need more proof seat belts work? Well, a year later, I was involved in a single-vehicle accident. I'd just gotten onto a road and was accelerating to the 55-mph speed limit when I saw a pile of pine straw ahead in my lane. Because of an approaching vehicle, I couldn't dodge into the oncoming lane to avoid the pile. What I couldn't see was a large piece of a fallen tree limb buried beneath the straw.

When my front passenger-side tire hit the branch, it sent my car veering into the oncoming lane. I avoided going off the road into a ditch, but fishtailed when I swerved right to avoid the oncoming car. My car spun and then went off the right side of the road. As it did, one of the tires dug into the dirt and caused my car to simultaneously spin and flip. When everything stopped, my car was upside-down and facing the direction I'd come from. I was still safely in my seat — hanging by my seat belt. But it could have been much worse. Not being a frontal collision, my airbag never deployed. Had I been unbelted and thrown forward, there would have been nothing to protect me.

The crash totaled my car. Also,

I'd been heading home from college for Christmas break, so nearly everything I owned was in that car. Many of those things were damaged or destroyed — but that's a small price to pay. After all, while they could be replaced, I couldn't.

I survived with slight tenderness in my right shoulder and some pain in my right ankle where it had gotten caught in the pedals as the car rolled. I'd been going about 50 mph when I crashed, and the way my car spun and flipped, I'd have been dead without my seat belt. I'd likely have been ejected and smeared across the road like the quart of barbecue I'd bought to take home. Not a pretty picture.

How about you? Are you ready to strap in and survive? It's your choice. Consider it carefully because you may well live or die by it.◀



Snowboarding the Smart Way

JOSHUA TURNER
5th Medical Brigade
Birmingham, Ala.



Snowboarding is a great way to have fun, but, at the same time, it can also present some real dangers such as blown knees and head injuries. For some, snowboarding involves speeding down steep hills past skiers, boarders and other obstacles. Falls will happen — no matter how good you are — and collisions are relatively common. However, regardless your skill level, taking the time to prepare before heading out will reduce your chances of becoming an accident statistic.

The skier and snowboarder safety code, which is printed on virtually every lift ticket and posted in numerous places around most ski areas, lists some inherent dangers and risks. They include existing and changing snow conditions; bare spots, rocks, stumps, trees; collisions with natural or man-made objects or other skiers; variations in terrain; and the failure of skiers to ski within their own abilities. Winter weather, especially in mountainous terrain, can range from sunny and bright to bitterly cold. Conditions can change rapidly from one extreme to the

next, one slope to the other, so it's important to constantly monitor the conditions and recognize the signs of approaching bad weather.

When boarders head up high mountains, they become susceptible to acute mountain sickness, which occurs when a person's body doesn't adapt to its current altitude. The most frequent symptoms include headache, queasiness, tiredness and trouble sleeping. Following these simple guidelines from the Colorado Altitude Research Institute may minimize symptoms of AMS:

- Exercise in moderation.
- Drink more water than usual. When you combine altitude with physical exertion, you need to drink before you get thirsty.
- Eat food high in carbohydrates — such as grains, pasta, fruits and vegetables — and avoid salty foods.
- Limit alcohol consumption. It's tempting to party the evening you roll into a ski town. However, drinking alcohol and cheating yourself on sleep the night before

you ski is a big mistake. Use common sense.

- If your symptoms get worse or do not go away after a day or two at altitude, you need to seek medical help. All medical centers in high-altitude communities are used to dealing with these symptoms.

Before you venture out to the slopes, it's important to have the right gear and know how to use it. Here's a list of gear you'll need each time you head up the mountain:

- **Snowboard.** In general, an all-mountain snowboard is the best bet for beginners, rather than a specialty board, which is harder to turn and balance on. Also, the longer a board is, the more difficult it will be to control. Choose a board that is the right length for your size and snowboarding ability.
- **Boots.** As the connecting point to your snowboard, boots are a vital piece of equipment. Make sure to get real snowboard boots (not moonboots or hiking boots) that fit correctly



to keep your feet comfortable and warm. For most beginner snowboarders, soft snowboard boots are easier to control than hard boots. Always keep your boots laced up tight to give your feet and ankles the support they need.

- **Bindings.** Most snowboard bindings are of the strap-on variety, which are compatible with the greatest number of boots. Be sure to keep your straps securely fastened to give you the most control over your snowboard. Some bindings, though, are step-in types. Make sure you get the right bindings for your boots, and have a trained professional at a snowboard shop adjust the angle of your bindings to put your feet in the right positions.
- **Helmet.** As is the case with many sports, a helmet is the most

important piece of equipment when it comes to preventing life-threatening injuries. You should wear one any time you go boarding. Get a helmet that fits properly and keep the chin strap fastened to keep it securely in place. Also, make sure to get a real snowboard helmet (not a football or bike helmet) that allows space for your goggles and ventilation on warm days.

- **Goggles and sunglasses.** The sun's rays are considerably stronger at high altitudes than they are at sea level, and when they bounce off the gleaming white snow, they can be a serious threat to your eyes. Sunglasses are the best way to protect your eyes from the sun's rays, but you should also always bring a pair of goggles that are the right size in case it gets cold or begins to snow. Goggles are

also better at protecting your eyes from tree branches and other hazards.

- **Gloves or mittens.** Many snowboard gloves include pockets for hand warmers to keep your fingers nice and toasty. If you're still worried about your hands getting cold, however, it's a good idea to wear mittens, which are generally warmer than gloves.
- **Dress in layers.** Layering allows you to accommodate your body's constantly changing temperature. For example, dress in polypropylene underwear (tops and bottoms), which feels good next to the skin, dries quickly, absorbs sweat and keeps you warm. Wear a turtleneck, sweater and jacket. Bring a headband or hat with you to the slopes to help prevent heat loss is through your head.

- **Wrist guards.** When you first learn how to snowboard, you will spend a lot of time falling forward and breaking your fall with your hands. This can lead to broken wrists and forearms, which are very common snowboarding injuries. Be sure to wear rigid wrist guards designed for snowboarding or in-line skating to protect yourself when you fall.

Once you have your gear, it's time to head out, right? Not quite, here are a few more tips you'll need to consider before you strap into your board:

- Make sure you're in shape beforehand. Don't try to ski yourself into shape.
- When buying skiwear, look for fabric that is water and wind resistant. Look for wind flaps to shield zippers, snug cuffs at

wrists and ankles, collars that can be snugged up to the chin and drawstrings that can be adjusted for comfort and aid in keeping the wind out.

- **Wear sun protection.** The sun reflects off snow and is stronger than you think, even on cloudy days.
- Snowboarding is a high-speed extreme sport that exposes individuals to different levels of danger. Each year, snowboarders are seriously injured and some even die due to human errors. Before you attempt snowboarding, have some basic knowledge of the possible risks you may encounter on or off the slopes.
- While many consider

snowboarding to be a fun and high-adrenaline activity, remember this — before you take on the mountain, keep safety in mind. A little time spent assessing the risks can save a whole lot of time healing or, worse, your family from grieving.◀

PLAY

it SAFE

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 ROBERT L. NORTON
 Detachment 2, F Company, 1st Battalion, 167th Aviation Regiment
 New Hampshire Army National Guard
 Concord, N.H.

It was a clear, crisp day in New Hampshire's White Mountains as we flew visual flight rules in our UH-60A. Chief Warrant Officer 2 Gray, the pilot in command for this flight, and I had departed the Army National Guard Concord Army Aviation Support Facility for some mountain training. The winds were light enough that we practiced mountain approaches to the helipad atop Mount Washington, not far from an observatory.

We were flying without a crew in the back, and the sun coming through the windows kept us from needing to run the heater. As a result, however, we had very little air circulation in the aircraft. As we hovered over the pad on one of the approaches, the small vent on my pilot-side window popped open and Gray thought he smelled something. I closed the vent, commenting that I hadn't noticed anything unusual.

We decided to land nearby at Twin Mountain Airport to check the aircraft. As we slowed to land and entered effective translational lift, we both immediately noticed something that smelled like burning plastic. Up to this point, nothing in the cockpit suggested any problems and our engine indications were all within limits.

Once we were on the ground, I told Gray that, because of the odor, I suspected we had an electrical problem. He did a walk-around of the aircraft, looking to find the cause. Just as he was finishing, smoke began billowing into the aircraft from the right-rear part of the cabin near the rescue hoist. He immediately reentered the co-pilot's seat and we preformed a dual emergency engine shutdown and exited the aircraft.

Fortunately, we had another aircraft in the vicinity. Once the smoke and fumes cleared out of the cockpit, we used our high-frequency radio — which

operated on battery power — to contact them.

While the other aircraft was en route, we inspected the No. 2 engine cowling. We discovered the V band clamp connecting the engine to the hover infrared suppressor system baffle deswirlers had failed. Looking closely, we could see a one-inch gap between the sections. The smell we noticed was gaskets melting in the No. 2 engine cowling.

The second Black Hawk landed behind us and shut down. Its pilot, CW2 Barnes, walked to our aircraft, stopping to pick up a metal fin lying on the tarmac. We soon identified it as a missing fin from the deswirlers. Fortunately, the PC in the other aircraft was our facility maintenance officer, CW5 Gokey. He assessed the damage and took pictures of the area. We then secured the aircraft and left it under the supervision of the local sheriff's department. The UH-60 was recovered two days later.

Upon examination, maintainers found damage to the aircraft's No. 2 engine cowling and HIRSS baffle deswirlers. High temperatures also damaged sheet metal in the engine compartment.

What I took away from this incident was that, especially in a peacetime environment, it definitely pays to play it safe. Choosing to land the aircraft at a suitable site and give it an once-over paid huge dividends in this case. I'd hate to think about what could've happened had we headed home fat, dumb and happy and something major failed. ◀

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Did you ever follow a hunch that something was wrong with your aircraft and later discovered you'd dodged a bullet? That's a story worth telling, especially if it keeps another crew from biting the bullet. Please take a few moments to write down what happened and email it to safe.knowledge@conus.army.mil.



A MOMENTARY LACK OF GOOD

JUDGMENT

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 4 R. JAMES STEPHENS
F Company, 1st Battalion, 214th Aviation Regiment
Fort Knox, Ky.

As aviators and crewmembers, we are highly trained professionals. We do our job repeatedly to the point of muscle memory. The only thing that changes are the conditions or missions we fly. We are expected to operate with great attention to detail. But once we are off duty, why do we find ourselves taking risks that we might not take on duty?

I was a state highway patrolman a few years ago in Arizona. Just before Christmas, my partner and I took a call for a fatal accident involving a motorcycle and an SUV. An ambulance service from Nevada was en route to the scene and would arrive before us; but for investigation purposes, we had jurisdiction.

The accident was on Highway 93 between Kingman, Ariz., and Boulder Dam, which is on the Colorado River, separating Arizona and Nevada. We left Kingman at a high rate of speed

with lights and siren on, cutting through the cold, dark desert. The drive was about 50 miles, so we knew it would take a while to get there.

When we arrived on the scene, traffic was backed up a couple miles in both directions and many people were standing outside of their vehicles. The scene was quiet except for a few vehicles that drivers had left running for heat. In the distance, you could faintly hear occasional radio traffic from emergency vehicles that had arrived about 30 minutes prior.

Emergency responders had already secured the scene and extricated the driver of the SUV. A Life Flight from Las Vegas was also just landing to transport the driver to a hospital. As I surveyed the scene, I noticed there was a large indentation in the SUV's shattered windshield, and the driver's-side door was caved in. The SUV was now off the road and turned 180 degrees from its original direction of travel. The driver's air bag had deployed, probably saving his life.

The driver of the motorcycle was lying faceup in the roadway. His bike was in pieces, scattered about 200 feet across the roadway. As I examined him, I noticed he wore most of his personal protective equipment. Unfortunately, he chose to wear a novelty helmet that did not provide appropriate protection. The whole top of the helmet was missing, as was the man's upper cranium. Brain matter was lying in the road not too far from the body.

The man was traveling from

Phoenix to Las Vegas, just as he probably had many times in the past. Witnesses said he'd passed them at a high rate of speed, weaving in and out of traffic before colliding with the SUV. Sadly, this momentary lack of good judgment claimed his life. Now, his family and friends, as well as the driver of the SUV, will have to pay for that bad judgment.

I have been in Army aviation since 1990. Over the years, I've seen numerous decisions and incidents that involved a momentary lack

of good judgment. Some paid the ultimate price for it, while others miraculously lived to see another day. My challenge to you is to always have a plan and execute it using sound judgment. With a good plan and sound judgment, you can't go wrong. Don't let your daily routine lead you to becoming complacent. Whether you're riding, driving or flying, always think safety! ◀

Don't Toy with Safety

LISA J. YOUNG
U.S. Army Public Health Command
Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.

This Christmas, choose toys that will make the holidays safe and memorable for your children. Toys should be a source of fun and learning. Too often, however, children are injured — or even killed — by toys that are not age appropriate, poorly designed or in disrepair. When choosing a toy, make sure to match it to the child's abilities. A toy that is too advanced or too simple for a child may be misused, which can lead to injury.

Keep in mind these handy tips when shopping for toys:

- Think big. All toy parts should be larger than the child's mouth to prevent choking and other injuries.
- Never give any toy with small parts to a child under 3, and keep small parts away from older

- children who still put toys in their mouths.
- Make sure small parts of larger toys cannot break off.
- Keep deflated or broken balloons away from children. If suddenly inhaled, they can cause suffocation.
- Read the instructions before buying a toy. Look

AGE-APPROPRIATE TOY SUGGESTIONS

- for labels that give age recommendations and use that information as a guide.
- Hold noisemaking toys next to your own ear to determine whether it will be too loud for a young child.
- Look for sturdy toy construction. The eyes, nose and other small parts on soft toys and stuffed animals should be securely fastened.
- Avoid toys with sharp edges.
- Ensure the tips of arrows and darts are blunt, made of soft rubber or plastic and securely fastened to the shaft.

- Reserve hobby kits, such as chemistry sets, for a child older than 12. Provide proper supervision for children ages 12 to 15.
- For information on recent recalls and product safety news, visit the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission website at <http://www.cpsc.gov/> and the American Academy of Pediatrics website at http://aapnews.aappublications.org/cgi/collection/health_alerts.

FYI
Manufacturers follow certain guidelines and label most new toys for specific age groups.

Newborn-1 Year	1-2 Years (Toddler)	3-5 Years (Preschooler)	5-10 Years
Toys for this age group should be colorful and textured to appeal to a baby's sight, hearing and touch.	Toys for this age group should be soft and able to withstand a toddler's curious nature.	Toys for this age group are usually experimental and should imitate the activities of parents and older children.	Toys for this age group should help promote skill development, creativity and play with others.
Large blocks	Cloth and plastic books with large pictures	Books/puzzles with large pieces	Blunt scissors, sewing sets
Pots and pans	Sturdy dolls	Large mega blocks	Card games
Rattles	Kiddy cars	Outdoor toys (swing, sandbox, slide)	Balls/sports equipment/roller skates
Soft, washable animals, dolls and balls	Musical tops	Crayons, finger paint, clay	Crafts
Bright, moveable objects out of reach of infant	Nesting and stacking toys	Blackboard and chalk	Hand puppets
Floating bath toys	Push and pull toys (with no long strings)	Dress-up clothes	Bicycles
Squeeze toys	Toy telephones	Tea party utensils	Easy computer games

It's natural for an aircrew to be focused on performing its mission. But what happens when focus crosses the line into fixation? What happens when situational awareness is momentarily sacrificed in a sky crowded with aircraft?

My unit was conducting AH-64D aerial gunnery training at Fort Carson, Colo., in the fall of 2009. I was fresh out of flight school and completed my readiness level progression weeks before starting the gunnery training. I was confident in my skills and out to prove myself. As the newest aviator in the company, I was scheduled to fly with the company standardization pilot — the best risk mitigation available.

The SP had nearly 4,000 hours total flight time. He'd conducted some of my readiness level progression, so I was excited to fly with him for gunnery. We worked together well as a crew and received a perfect score during our table V in the simulator. We'd also scored well in our table VII day and night in the aircraft. I'd done tower duties the week before gunnery and was very familiar with the target sets. I felt confident our table VIII would go well.

When I climbed into the front seat that day, I was completely focused on earning the best possible gunnery score. As it turned out, our day table more than met my expectations and we posted a perfect score. But as we went to the aircraft to complete our night table, focus morphed into fixation. As we took to the

air, I became not only blind to the dangers around me, but deaf too.

The gunnery range we were using bordered on the Class D airspace surrounding Butts Army Airfield. In fact, during the outbound and inbound prior to the start-fire line, you're in Class D airspace. Therefore, we not only monitored tower on radio, we also monitored Butts radio, which controlled traffic in the restricted airspace where we were shooting. In addition, we also monitored the battalion tactical operations center frequency along with a simulated FIRES net on which we conducted our table.

As I flew the aircraft and attempted to monitor the radios, I was wearing an integrated helmet and display sight system. The IHADSS provided me a heads-up display for the gunnery shoot that night. On our outbound, I was so busy discussing the IHADSS shot with the SP in the rear seat I never heard Butts tower transmit a traffic advisory. As we turned inbound and readied the gun, I was totally focused on acquiring the target and lining up the shot.

Imagine our surprise when, about 500 meters from the start-fire line, a Bell 206 crossed our flight path from right to left, maybe 250 meters in front of us. We quickly turned right to avoid them and contacted tower about the traffic. They told us they'd tried to contact us after the crew of the 206 reported seeing us, but got no response. Apparently, the crew in the 206 wasn't aware we were maneuvering close to one of the known check points when they turned into our flight path.

We conducted another orbit and finished our table. The shoot went well and we posted the highest score in the battalion, earning recognition as the top crew. But things could have gone much differently. Fixated on the target and devoid of situational awareness, we could've hit another aircraft instead of the target. That's a price no one wants to pay.

Before our next gunnery training, we put out an advisory in the notices to airmen about our operations in the area. We also changed our gunnery aviator procedure guide to discuss airspace operations and specify radio duties. This helped contribute to creating a common traffic advisory frequency for operations in and around Fort Carson's restricted airspace.

As an aviator, I focus strongly on completing my mission. However, I can never become so focused on one task that I let slip the other things necessary to completing the mission safely. When the mission ends, I want to climb out of an aircraft — not be dragged out of its wreckage. ◀

Fatal Focus

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 KYLE PROSOSKI
1st Battalion, 2nd Aviation Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division
Fort Carson, Colo.

Editor's note: Information published in the accident briefs section is based on preliminary loss reports submitted by units and is subject to change. For more information on selected accident briefs, email safe.knowledge@conus.army.mil.

AVIATION

CH-47D

CLASS A

- The aircraft entered a dynamic rollover during in-flight landing in dust conditions.
- The aircraft landed hard during an exfiltration landing under night vision goggle conditions. The aircraft came to rest on its left side and caught fire.

during level flight at an altitude of 1,000 feet above ground level during readiness level progression training. The instructor pilot entered autorotation and safely landed the aircraft in a farm field, using 80 percent throttle to avoid a second overspeed condition.

MH-60K

CLASS C

- The aircraft's main rotor blade was damaged when it contacted a C-130 aerial refueling drogue. All four tip caps and one blade had to be replaced.

MH-6M

CLASS C

- The aircraft experienced an overtorque condition of 116 percent for 1.1 seconds during a training simulation. The aircraft was shut down without further incident.

OH-58D

CLASS B

- The crew was conducting Basic Warfighter Skills training when the aircraft's left skid contacted the ground. The main rotor system subsequently contacted the ground, causing damage to the main and tail rotor systems as well as structural damage. There were no personnel injuries.

CLASS C

- The crew experienced an engine overspeed condition (118 to 120 percent NR)



resulting in the loss of his index finger to the first joint.

CLASS C

- A Soldier was injured when he was launched over the handlebars of his mountain bike. The Soldier was riding downhill and trying to slow the bike when his front tire hit rocks, causing him to wreck.

GROUND

Personnel Injury

CLASS B

- A Soldier was injured while performing maintenance on a privately owned vehicle with another Soldier. The vehicle's transmission slipped and pinned the Soldier's hand,



DRIVING

POV

CLASS A

- A Soldier died after his vehicle struck a tree.
- A Soldier died when his pickup truck left the roadway and struck a tree. A passenger in the vehicle was also injured. Alcohol use was a factor.
- A Soldier died when she was ejected from her vehicle during an accident.
- A Soldier died when he lost control of his vehicle in a curve and overturned. The Soldier was not wearing his seat belt and was ejected from the vehicle. Authorities cite fatigue as a contributing factor.
- A Soldier was killed when his vehicle struck a tunnel for unknown reasons.

POM

CLASS A

- A Soldier died when he lost control of his motorcycle on a highway exit ramp. The Soldier was wearing a helmet.
- A Soldier was killed when he lost control of his motorcycle, ran off the road and crashed into a tree.
- A Soldier died after he lost control of his motorcycle and crashed.
- A Soldier was riding with other Soldier and civilian riders when he lost control of his motorcycle and struck a guardrail. The Soldier was wearing full PPE but suffered fatal injuries. He was licensed and had completed all training through the ERC and MSRC.



- A Soldier was killed when he attempted to pass a slower-moving vehicle and collided with an oncoming pickup truck.

CLASS B

- A Soldier suffered injuries to his jaw and wrist, as well as multiple leg fractures, when his motorcycle collided with another vehicle.

If it happens ...

REPORT IT
ARMY ACCIDENT REPORTING SYSTEM

<https://safety.army.mil>

ARE YOU READY?

ARAP is a Web-based initiative that provides battalion-level commanders with data on their formation's readiness posture.

Sign up for your assessment today!



ARAP

ARMY READINESS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

<https://arap.safety.army.mil>

Wouldn't you like to know if your unit is about to experience a mishap?

Wouldn't you like to prevent the loss of personnel and equipment?

Don't you want to protect your combat power?

Active Army, Reserve and National Guard Battalions 2012 Participation Locations

U.S. Locations

Alabama	Idaho	Maryland
Alaska	Illinois	Massachusetts
Arizona	Indiana	Maine
Arkansas	Iowa	Minnesota
California	South Carolina	Mississippi
Colorado	South Dakota	Missouri
Connecticut	Tennessee	Montana
Delaware	Texas	Nevada
District of Columbia	North Carolina	New Hampshire
Florida	Kansas	New Jersey
Georgia	Kentucky	New Mexico
Hawaii	Louisiana	New York

Overseas Locations

Alghanistan	Japan
Africa	Kuwait
Bahrain	Netherlands Antilles
Belgium	Puerto Rico
Egypt	Qatar
Germany	United Kingdom
Guam	
Guantanamo Bay, Cuba	
Honduras	
Iraq	
Italy	

The signs are all around.

It's up to **YOU** to recognize and act on them.

Training, Discipline and Standards

Training, discipline and standards are the bedrock of our Army, and as Soldiers, you've been taught what right looks like. As leaders, you have a duty and a responsibility to maintain standards in your formation. You also have an obligation to your Soldiers and their families to manage risk and take action to correct problems. In our fight against accidental fatalities, knowledge is the weapon of choice.



U.S. ARMY
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U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER
<https://safety.army.mil>