



THIS MONTH DECEMBER 2015



'Tis the Season (for Home Fires)

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As the Christmas season approaches, many of us are decorating our homes, finalizing our wish lists and planning big meals. During this exciting time, however, we must not forget the holidays also bring an increased risk of home fires.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, December and January are the peak months for home fires, deaths and injuries. Families looking to spread holiday cheer should be aware that each year an average of 240 home fires start with Christmas trees and

an additional 1,300 begin with various other seasonal decorations. When decorating your home this holiday season, keep the following information in mind.

Trees

Fire is the primary concern with a live Christmas tree, which is often brought on by the combination of electrical malfunctions and a drying tree. To help cut the risk of tree fires, always purchase a freshly cut tree. A good test of a tree's freshness is to hold a branch between your thumb and forefinger and pull your

hand toward you. If the tree is fresh, it should lose very few needles.

It's also a good idea to do the bump test. Bump the base of the trunk against the ground and see if an excessive amount of needles fall off. It's normal for a tree to lose a few needles; however, a lot of falling needles could signal the tree is drying out and could soon become a fire hazard.

Once you get your tree home, be sure the stand's water reservoir is large enough for the tree and keep it full at all times. Stands should provide 1 quart of water per

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inch of trunk diameter. The average 6-foot tree has a 4-inch diameter trunk and can consume as much as 4 quarts, or 1 gallon, of water per day. For those who forget to keep

their tree watered, an automatic waterer would be a wise investment.

When selecting a location for the tree, make sure it is not close to a heat source such as a radiator or

furnace vent, which could cause it to dry out faster. Also, never place a tree near a fireplace because sparks can ignite the branches, decorations and gifts underneath. Keep your tree at least three feet from fireplaces, radiators, space heaters, heating vents and other sources of heat, and don't place it where it could block an exit.

It's also important to consider how long you plan to display your tree. The NFPA recommends you take down even a well-watered tree after four weeks. So, if you decorate your live tree immediately after Thanksgiving, it should be discarded the week after Christmas, not the week after New Year's Day.

Lights

Another concern with a live Christmas tree is the fire danger brought on by electrical malfunctions. Examine holiday lights, extension cords and other electrical items whether they are new or old. All of these items should feature the Underwriters Laboratories mark (the letters UL inside a circle), which means samples of the product have been tested for the risk of fire, electric shock and other hazards.

Before plugging in lights and other electrical decorations, inspect them for frayed cords, cracked sockets, broken bulbs or burned plugs and signs of wear and damage. It's best to position the tree in a corner or a less-traveled area near an outlet to eliminate the use of an extension cord. If you do need an extension cord, make sure you run it along a wall so it won't be a trip hazard.

Ho-ho-holiday Hazards

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Decorating the home for the holiday season is a great tradition. Don't forget, however, an essential part of stringing the lights and putting up the Christmas tree is keeping an eye on electrical safety. Here are a few simple steps to help ensure you have a safe and happy holiday season:

- Don't overload electric circuits. Check fuses or circuit breaker panels to see what your home can handle and stay well within the limits.

- Avoid putting too many strings of lights together and plugging them into a single outlet.

- Watch for flickering lights; sparks from appliances or wall outlets; warm plates, plugs or outlets; and dimming lights or television screens. These signal potential danger spots that could cause an electrical fire.

- Make sure there's a bulb in each socket. If a bulb burns out, leave it in until you have a replacement. Immediately replace any broken bulbs that have exposed filaments.

- Use only Underwriters Laboratory-approved equipment. Check for frayed cords, cracked insulation and damaged plugs.

- Surge protector strips are a safe option if you need more outlets.

- Match plugs with outlets. Never

force a three-pronged plug into a two-hole outlet or extension cord.

- Don't run extension cords under rugs, around furniture legs or across doorways.

- If you have children in the house or are expecting young visitors, inspect your home for cracked or missing outlet covers. Use safety caps to cover outlets.

- Keep live Christmas trees watered to prevent bulbs from igniting dry branches. Never use electrical decorations on metal trees. Instead, place colored spotlights beside or above the tree. If using an artificial tree, make sure you purchase one that is inflammable.

- Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls or other firm supports using plastic hooks or clips. Do not nail, tack, pinch, nick or stress wiring.

- Outdoor lighting should have insulated electrical cords and be plugged into a ground fault circuit interrupter-protected receptacle only. Keep all plugs and connectors off the ground and away from puddles and snow.

Don't let your holidays end in tragedy. Make electrical safety a priority this Christmas and be sure to carry it through the New Year and beyond.



Ensure your indoor-only lights, decorations and extension cords have green holographic UL marks. Light strings intended for indoor and outdoor use have red holographic UL marks. Also, don't use nails or staples to hang your lights. Instead, purchase plastic hooks or clips that are designed for hanging light strings. Always be sure to unplug tree lights and decorations before leaving

“Make sure you test your smoke detectors every month to ensure they're in proper working condition, and change the batteries every six months.”

home or going to bed. For more information on holiday electrical safety, see the story “Ho-ho-holiday Hazards” below.

Candles

December is also the peak time for home candle fires. In fact, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Eve are among the top five days of the year for home candle

fires. Candles are responsible for at least 71 percent of December home fires due to improper decorating practices or candles left unattended.

Candles should be kept away from decorations, curtains, walls, bedding, paper, furniture and other combustible material as well as places or paths where they could be accidentally knocked over. Make sure you use sturdy, noncombustible candleholders that will collect dripping wax. Candles should never be used as Christmas tree ornaments. Remember to always blow out your candles before you leave your home or go to sleep.

Smoke detectors

Of course, all homes should have working smoke detectors installed. Make sure you test your smoke detectors every month to ensure they're in proper working condition, and change the batteries every six months. A good rule of thumb is to use the change to Daylight Saving Time as a reminder to replace the batteries.

Conclusion

Decorations are supposed to brighten the holiday season. When decorating your home this year, make safety a priority. With just a little bit of effort, you can help ensure your family has a safe and happy home for the holidays. ■

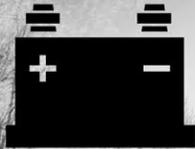
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READY ...OR NOT?

Ready ... or Not is a call to action for leaders, Soldiers, Army Civilians and Family members to assess their “readiness” for what lies ahead—the known as well as the unknown.

Throughout our professional and personal lives, events happen all around us. We are often able to shape the outcome of those events, but many times we're not. Navigating life's challenges is all about decision-making.

So are **YOU** ready ... or not?



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The Cold, Hard Facts

RETIRED COL. JOSEPH MCKEON, M.D.
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During World War II and Korea, the number of Soldiers incapacitated due to cold weather injuries was staggering. Lt. Col. (Dr.) Kenneth Orr reported in 1954 that the number of hospitalization days due to cold injuries in those two conflicts was more than 3 million! Imagine our entire Army being hospitalized for more than a week. This stands as a stark reminder of how poorly trained and equipped Soldiers can rapidly become compromised, especially in the absence of meticulous supervision by caring leaders.

As a Soldier today, you are neither poorly trained nor poorly equipped, nor are you lacking caring leaders. So why bother writing about cold injuries? Unfortunately, it's because they continue to happen, even though they are preventable. The equipment issued to you, when used and maintained properly, will allow you to fight and win in even the most austere environments.

I know this because when I was building my little shelter in the snow near Fairbanks, Alaska, it was minus 20 F and my gear protected me. And then there was the time I spent the night unexpectedly on a hilltop at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California. I was with a light infantry battalion and had nothing but the BDUs I was wearing and my TA-50. Even though the temperature was only in the 40s,



I endured the coldest night of my life. But this article isn't about war stories, it's about protecting yourself and the Soldiers you work with.

As individuals and leaders, it is your responsibility to ensure your Soldiers are properly trained and equipped. That means anticipating being colder and staying longer than originally planned. Those who grew up in cold environments have

is too short to make all the mistakes yourself, so learn from others!

The typical victim

When considering injury prevention, it often pays to target your efforts at the highest risk group. So what does the typical cold injury patient look like? He (I'm not using your usual sexist male pronoun; it's just that the typical cold injury victim

“When considering injury prevention, it often pays to target your efforts at the highest risk group.”

learned how to respect the weather and dress for it. Few residents of Fairbanks or Watertown, New York, would walk out to the mailbox in a T-shirt and shorts in February, or drive to the store without a coat and gloves in the car. If the door accidentally locked behind you or the car broke down, you could freeze to death. So what was I thinking, ending up with my hooah medical team stuck on a hilltop at NTC with no snivel gear? The fact is, I wasn't thinking, and I set us up for cold injuries. Life

is male) is young (usually about 20 years old), from a warm climate (he hasn't learned you don't walk to your mailbox in February in a T-shirt), has less than 18 months in the service (so it's his first winter field training exercise) and he's neglected his foot care. In the infantry, foot care is a leadership issue, and the rest of the Army needs to get with the program! In addition, he is likely to use alcohol, tobacco and, possibly, medications. Look around your squad, platoon, company, battery



or troop and see if you have Soldiers that fit the description because they are at risk. Identify and pay special attention to them now, before you go to the field or deploy.

Some chilling information

Now that we have an idea of who is most likely to get hurt, let's briefly discuss cold injuries and what we can do to prevent them. The human body is indeed fearfully and wonderfully made. I'm sure you've noticed how some folks get very red in the face when they exercise. That's the body's cooling mechanism shunting blood to your skin so the blood can be readily cooled. But did you know the shunting process also works the opposite way? In cold environments, as much as 99 percent of the surface blood flow can be shifted back inside you to keep your vital organs warm. Amazing, isn't it?

However, this protective mechanism that has been engineered into our bodies can be defeated by what we do. For instance, dehydration decreases the amount of blood that is circulating, thus hindering the body's heating mechanisms. That's why it's so important to ensure we stay hydrated. Pushing fluids can be forgotten in a cold environment. This is especially true if you have to get out of a warm tent when it's below zero, trudge through the snow and "drop trou" to go to the latrine.

In cold weather, you may be tempted to drink less to reduce your need to leave your nice, warm tent. However, this can set you up for dehydration and even a heat injury. That's right, a heat injury! When you are performing hard physical work in a cold environment and wearing all of your protective equipment,

Did You Know?

The following cold injuries require immediate medical attention, so don't delay if you or your buddy exhibits any of the following symptoms:

- **Hypothermia.** Shivering, an altered sense of consciousness and uncoordinated movements. Hypothermia can be fatal if treatment is not given immediately.
- **Frostbite.** Loss of feeling or a tingling sensation in the affected area along with white, gray, red, yellow or waxy-looking skin. The frozen tissue will feel solid to the touch.
- **Trench foot.** Numbness in the feet accompanied by burning sensations and shooting pain. Severely affected tissue will appear pale and slightly blue. Trench foot can lead to gangrene.
- **Chilblain.** Reddened, slightly swollen skin accompanied by a prickly or burning sensation. Left untreated, chilblain can lead to more severe cold injuries.

it's easy for you to start sweating and become overheated. You can end up exhausted and sweaty, and then rapidly cool off in the cold. It's no wonder the typical cold injury victim is a young, first-term, male Soldier. Who usually gets detailed to put up the GP mediums?

In addition to the demographics listed above (young, first-term males), there are other significant risk factors. If you have a previous history of cold injuries, you are obviously at risk because you've already shown you are susceptible. In addition, if you are not physically fit, you are more likely to be injured; thus the Army's emphasis on physical fitness.

Poor or inadequate nutrition also can quickly take its toll. When you're in a cold environment, your body has a greater metabolic demand because you're burning more calories trying to stay warm. If you need 3,000 calories per day in

a controlled environment, you may need up to 4,500 calories in a cold environment just to maintain your body weight. Eating meals will also increase water consumption, which will be a hedge against dehydration.

Too little activity also can be a risk factor. While overheating is a risk when you are working hard, lack of activity can cause you to have cold injuries because of poor circulation in the extremities. Using those large muscle groups will ensure good circulation and heating, so get up and do 20 side-straddle hops (when not in contact with the enemy!).

Alcohol and tobacco, as well as caffeine, can also make it harder for you to stay warm. These substances all affect your body's ability to dilate and constrict the blood vessels, which can defeat your body's built-in heating and cooling mechanisms. Prescription and over-the-counter medications can also adversely affect



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your body's heating and cooling, so it is important to let your doctor know if you will be exposed to cold weather. If you are a leader, you need to create a healthy work environment where Soldiers are steered away from unwholesome behaviors such as tobacco use and excessive alcohol consumption.

Injury-prevention guidelines

Keep the following tips in mind to avoid becoming a cold-weather casualty.

- Dress in layers and avoid tight-fitting clothing. This will improve your circulation and provide layers of air between layers of clothing to help insulate you.
- Change your socks frequently to ensure your feet stay dry. This is

going to require that you actually take off your boots and socks and change the latter, maybe even the former. If you are a squad leader, you may have to closely observe your Soldiers to ensure compliance.

- Beware of the wind. Wind chill can cause skin to freeze at temperatures that would be much less dangerous were there no wind. This is especially important when you are working around helicopters or in open areas where trees or man-made features are not available for wind protection.
- Protect your face and ears; these areas often suffer frostbite because of exposure and decreased blood flow. Wear the appropriate gloves, especially when you're handling petroleum, oil and

lubricant products, and avoid touching cold metal or fuel.

- Eat often and drink warm, non-caffeinated beverages. Soup is super! Use the buddy system. Seek medical attention for yourself and your buddy before symptoms become severe. As cold skin gets numb, subtle damage can progress and become a severe injury.

Don't be like those thousands of Soldiers that spent weeks convalescing during World War II and Korea. This Army needs every Soldier, every day, so take care of your body. ■

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Luck isn't a Plan

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 4 DOUG DETERMAN
Western Army Aviation Training Site
Silverbell Army Heliport
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There I was, Chalk 2 in a formation of three UH-1s. We had just completed our mission and were returning to base. The formation was in echelon left and we were briefed to fly with two to five rotor discs of separation.

I was flying from the right seat when Chalk 1 announced they had a fire and immediately turned hard left. I had no time to react and limited options. I could not turn left because Chalk 3 was there; why destroy three aircraft when we can keep it at two? I applied some aft-cyclic for a cyclic climb and found my chin bubble picture filled with the rotor blade system of Chalk 1. Luckily, when Chalk 1 turned left, they significantly lowered the collective, which kept us from hitting each other. My actions did nothing to save my crew; I simply had no time to react.

So how did this very near-miss happen? There were many contributing factors, beginning with crew selection. Chalk 1 paired the least experienced pilot in command in the flight with the least experienced pilot in the aircraft. Second, the PI on the controls incorrectly responded to the fire light. This should have been a simple step to execute. Chalk 1 could have simply asked or given us a chance to tell them there was no fire. Ironically, the incident that nearly destroyed two aircraft and killed eight



crewmembers was all over a false light. Third, the PC failed to direct the PI accordingly, or take the flight controls from him when he reacted poorly. In addition, the PI failed to process the information given to him by the crew chief and respond correctly. When the PI was asked why he turned directly into the formation, he blamed it on the crew chief directing him to do so.

I want to go over this in greater detail because I am very passionate about this failure of aircrew coordination. The crew chief did an excellent job in this situation. When the pilots called

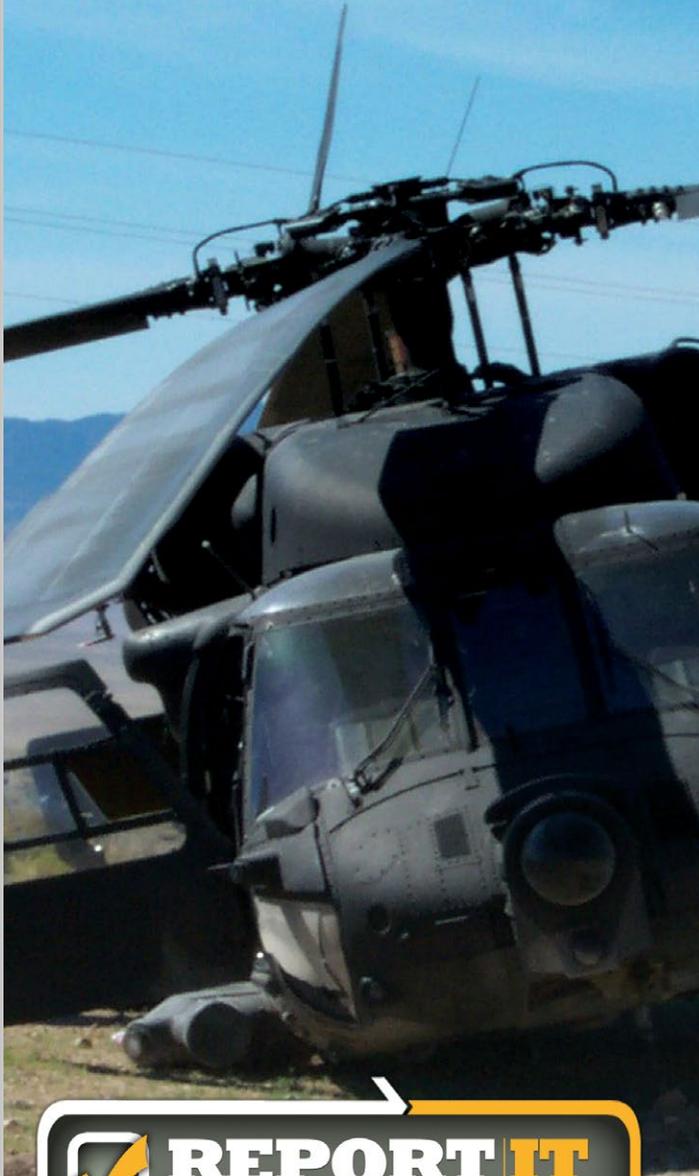
out the fire light, the crew chief simply called out a landing zone at the 10 o'clock position. Had this been proven to be an actual emergency requiring a landing, he had properly identified a suitable landing area. As pilots, our job is to process the information we get from the aircraft, radios, crewmembers and our senses and make an informed, safe decision. The PI failed at this task and the PC failed to correct it, leading to a near miss.

I know it seems like I am beating up on the pilots of Chalk 1. Truth is, I am. Their actions

“Do not overreact to caution and warning lights; verify the emergency first and think about your situation and surroundings before you act.”



If it happens ...



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

nearly killed themselves and six other innocent bystanders. I always feel bad for the non-rated crewmembers who are “just along for the ride” when pilots make poor decisions that lead to their deaths. However, I am not without blame in this incident. I am very confident in my ability to fly formation. My confidence led me to fly at about one and a half rotor discs separation instead of the briefed two to five rotor discs. I find that the closer I get, the easier it is to

“Do not depend on luck to bring you back home. When planning your crews, mix the experience levels.”

catch the movement of the other aircraft and make minimal corrections to stay in perfect formation. Had I been flying at two discs, it would not have been quite as close. Better yet, had I been flying at five discs, I would have given myself more room and time to react instead of depending on luck to save my crew.

Do not depend on luck to bring you back home. When planning your crews, mix the experience levels. Do not overreact to caution and warning lights; verify the emergency first and think about your situation and surroundings before you act. Again, the non-rated crewmembers depend on you to make sound, safe decisions. Never blame them for giving you information; that is their job. Your job is to process the data they give you.

Lastly, don't just acknowledge mission and crew briefs — follow them. These briefings should be designed with safety in mind. ■



The Fall Guy

PATRICK BEACOM

It has no electrical cord, gas engine or whirling blades; yet, it's still one of the most potentially dangerous items you have in your garage. Each year, more than 220,000 people are injured while using it. In fact, annually, it sends more people to the emergency room than lawn mowers and home workshop saws combined. If you haven't already guessed, I'm talking about the ladder.

The most common outcomes of ladder-related accidents vary from the "bruised ego" to fractured bones that required surgical repair and extensive rehabilitation. Injuries usually involve the head, arms and legs, and most result from people losing their balance, not because the ladder wasn't secured. Generally, people who fall from heights less than 20 feet onto a soft surface such as grass suffer the fewest injuries — typically bumps, bruises or

"A good rule of thumb to follow is for every 4 feet of ladder height, the bottom of the ladder should be 1 foot away from the wall or object it is leaning against."

sprains. With falls from heights beyond 20 feet, the risk of life-altering injuries increases.

Before you climb a ladder to tackle that list of projects around



the house, take a few moments to review some safety tips. A little review now might keep you from becoming one of the thousands who will wind up in the emergency room following an accident.

The first step to using any ladder is to read the instructions included in the manufacturer's use and care booklet. Manufacturers'

instructions contain guidelines that can help consumers use ladders more safely and effectively as well as important guidelines for weight and height limits.

Another consideration for

safety is to choose the proper ladder for the intended task. For example, if the ladder will be used near electrical sources, consumers should use a wood or fiberglass ladder to reduce the possibility of electrical shock.

Before even stepping on the first rung, always make sure you thoroughly inspect the ladder. Ensure the ladder has been well maintained, the rungs are clean and all parts are intact. Never climb on a slippery or shaky ladder.

Setting up the ladder correctly may also help prevent falls. When planting the base of any ladder, place all feet on a firm, level surface, not on rocks or boards. Spreaders, the devices that hold the front and back sections of a stepladder in an open position, should be completely open and locked before any weight is placed on the ladder.

If using an extension ladder,



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don't place it at too extreme an angle. Remember, different ladders have different safety considerations. A good rule of thumb to follow is for every 4 feet of ladder height, the bottom of the ladder should be 1 foot away from the wall or object it is leaning against.

Finally, Underwriters Laboratories recommends consumers follow these precautions to help prevent ladder accidents:

- Always use a ladder that is long enough for the task at hand. A great number of ladder accidents are the result of using a ladder that is too short.

FYI

Human error is by far the leading cause of ladder accidents. Never use a ladder in any way other than what it is intended for and follow the manufacturer's provided instructions in the operator's manual. Also, remember to never lengthen or alter a ladder in any way.

- Don't carry equipment while climbing a ladder. Invest in a tool belt or have someone hand the equipment to you.
 - Face the ladder when climbing up and down.
 - While on the ladder, don't overextend your reach. Make sure you keep your body centered between both side rails and your weight evenly distributed.
 - Never move a ladder while standing on it. Always make sure people and equipment are off the ladder before moving or closing it.
 - Never stand on a ladder's bucket shelf. Read and follow the warning stickers for the highest standing levels.

Don't be another statistic. Take the time to observe these precautions and exercise safe ladder use. It may just prevent you from shouting, "I've fallen and I can't get up!" ■



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When a Good Plan Goes Bad COMPILED BY THE KNOWLEDGE STAFF

Editor's note: Gen. George S. Patton once said, "A poor plan executed well is far better than a good plan executed poorly." So what happens when a designated driver plan goes bad? Chances are it looks a lot like the story below. The names of the Soldiers mentioned have been changed to protect their privacy.

Spc. Tom Woodson had been something of a model Soldier in his unit. A two-tour combat veteran with a reputation of leading by example, he'd won the respect of fellow Soldiers and earned his leaders' recommendation for promotion. It had been an interesting Friday for Tom. He'd gone on a foot march that morning and then later went before a promotion board. He'd done well on his promotion board and was looking forward to pinning on his sergeant's stripes. With the world going his way, he headed out in his truck to celebrate at a sports bar.

Tom met fellow platoon members Spcs. Grayson Marshall and Martin Lange at the bar. Martin didn't drink and was the obvious choice for designated driver should Tom or Grayson need a ride home. When they met that night, Martin didn't ask his friends for their keys. He decided, instead, just to keep a careful eye on his buddies.

Grayson and Tom had been in the bar playing pool. At some point, Grayson wandered off. Martin checked the area around the bar, its restrooms and the parking lot until he found him. Martin stuck



with Grayson for 20 minutes or so, periodically checking on Tom, who was talking to some girls. Sometime later, Martin lost track of Tom. After searching the bar and parking lot, Martin saw that both Tom and his truck were gone.

As it turned out, Tom had left the bar by himself and was driving

when medical personnel arrived and transported him to a hospital, his injuries proved fatal later that morning. Ironically, the Soldier who had a reputation for upholding standards on duty let them drop when he shed his uniform. With a blood alcohol content of 0.24 — three times the state's limit —

“Accidents don't happen in a vacuum; the key element is always people. Like many young Soldiers, Tom felt he was indestructible”

back to his barracks on a rural road that wound through the mountains. At some point Tom's truck ran off the road and rolled over. The rollover forces catapulted Tom — who was unbelted — out of the truck and caused severe head injuries. Although he was still alive

Tom was far too impaired to drive safely. Dead less than a day after his promotion board, he'd never see the sergeant stripes he'd earned.

Why did this happen?

Accidents don't happen in a vacuum; the key element is always



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people. Like many young Soldiers, Tom felt he was indestructible. Having survived combat, he felt he could survive anything. That night probably wasn't the first time he'd tried to drink and drive, but it was the last. Tom made at least four decisions that contributed to his death:

- He decided to consume alcoholic beverages.
- He decided to drive after drinking.
- He decided to circumvent the designated driver plan.
- He decided to drive without wearing his seat belt.

What about Martin's role? The most effective battle buddies for preventing these tragedies are designated drivers who fulfill their responsibilities, including taking away a buddy's keys before they get drunk. As Martin found out that night, you can't watch everyone all the time. The price of a letting a buddy slip through the cracks can be an empty space at the next formation.

What about leaders? Regardless how well Soldiers perform on duty, do their leaders know them well enough to recognize if they're at heightened risk off duty? After all, when does a Soldier stop being a Soldier or a leader stop being a leader? When did the Profession of Arms become merely a 9-to-5 job?

Training, without the discipline to follow it, won't prevent accidents. Tom had completed unit-, installation- and Army-level training to make him a more skillful and defensive driver. He had several years of experience driving privately owned vehicles before this accident. Tom knew the right things to do — he just chose not to do them.

Bad consequences follow bad choices — and choices are a matter of the will, not chance. Tom didn't intend to die that night, but he couldn't escape the consequences of his choices. Consequences are typically predictable, which means most accidents are preventable. When you have to decide whether to ride with a designated driver or drink and drive, what will you choose? Will you be able to live with the consequences? ■

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So are **YOU** ready ... or not?



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Stress in the Cockpit CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 ROBERT WARD

If you're an Army aviator, do you know why it is important to recognize the signs of fatigue and significant events in your life or the lives of the other Soldiers in your unit? I do. This is my story.

Sept. 30, 2008, was another typical day in Iraq — at least it began that way. My team was working the late night/early morning shift. It was 0300 when I showed up at our command post to prepare the mission packets for our upcoming flight. I was teamed with our company instructor pilot.

It was the last day of my birth month that I could finish my annual proficiency and readiness test check ride and we were in a real time crunch. Since there were several other aviators' birthdays in September, it was hard for our instructor pilot to make his rounds to the different



of a 15-month tour. Every day was running together into one long day, and most of the aviators were suffering from sleep deprivation. On top of this, our instructor pilot was having "issues" with his fiancée back home. He had talked about this to our platoon leaders but not in detail. We will finish

whole time we were focused inside the aircraft at the multipurpose displays and target acquisition display screen. You feel like you're in a daze looking at the roads and villages for hours on end.

Once we got into sector, we checked in with the unit that owned that province. They didn't have anything in particular going on that night, so they had us conduct an area recon of the whole sector. We split up the recon duties between both aircraft in the flight and it still took us until the end of our shift to complete it. As usual, we didn't see significant activity, so we refueled for the one-hour flight back to Camp Speicher.

En route to Speicher, my instructor pilot quizzed me on the basic aircraft capabilities. By the time we reached Speicher, we really wanted to just call it a day because we were so tired, but we still needed to finish a couple

"Every day was running together into one long day, and most of the aviators were suffering from sleep deprivation."

shifts to get everyone up to date on their APART and perform mission duties at the same time.

This was one of those nights. We were scheduled to fly a recon mission for four hours and then return home and complete a standardization flight. At this point we had been in Iraq for 12 months

that portion of the story later.

Our flight started with us flying from Camp Speicher to the Diayala province, which was about a one-hour trip. Along the way, we reconnoitered Military Supply Route Tampa, which we nicknamed the Tampa 5.0. The



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of maneuvers to complete the check ride. We broke off the formation flight and began to complete a couple of traffic patterns, doing basic maneuvers called for in the aircrew training manual.

After the basic maneuvers, we continued to Memorial Range to conduct combat maneuvering flight. I started running through the maneuvers and had just one last maneuver to go — the pitch-back turn. I conducted the maneuver in a conservative manner, which met the standard. My instructor pilot then took the controls and asked if I wanted to see the maneuver in a more aggressive manner, but still within standard. I said sure.

We picked up airspeed and started our steep pitch-up climb. He then began to roll the aircraft 90 degrees to the left. If it's properly performed, there should be a positive G force on the aircraft at all times; if not, you get into something referred to as flap-jacking. Once the aircraft started to roll, we could feel the weightlessness and realized we had flap-jacked and ended upside-down at about 1,000 feet above ground level.

My instructor pilot immediately rolled the aircraft upright. We did not have any airspeed, but we did have a massive rate of descent. With only a few hundred feet left, we put the aircraft into a dive to build forward airspeed and

then proceeded to pull in power. We "mushed" through for a couple hundred feet. Seeing the ground coming up really fast, we pulled all the power we could as a last-ditch effort. We pulled out at the last second, leaving a dust trail behind us. Being so close to camp, we continued straight to the parking area as we dual overtorqued the aircraft.

Now we will continue the story of the events that led up to this incident. The night before, our instructor pilot had gotten word his fiancée had left him for another military guy. He stayed up on the phone half the night trying to fix things back home. Once he went to bed, he couldn't sleep. This was brought up to our platoon leaders but brushed off because we only had one instructor pilot in our company to conduct all the standardization training and evaluation.

The bottom line of this story is to pick up on the little signs of what's happening in the lives of the Soldiers and aviators in your unit. As a leader, you almost have to be a psychologist. Did we flap-jack because my co-pilot was distracted by issues back home? It's hard to say. It is the responsibility of the individual aviator to ground yourself in the event you think you can't perform your duties in a safe manner. Remember, you are putting more than just your life in danger. ■

*Got a story to tell?
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RIDE FOR YOUR LIFE

The Motorcycle Mentorship Program establishes voluntary installation-level motorcycle associations where less experienced riders and seasoned riders can create a supportive environment of responsible motorcycle riding and enjoyment. This can create positive conduct and behavior and serve as a force multiplier that supports a commander's motorcycle accident prevention program.



MMP
MOTORCYCLE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

The logo features the letters 'MMP' in a large, bold, white font. To the right of the letters is a small, stylized illustration of a yellow and white motorcycle. Below the letters, the words 'MOTORCYCLE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM' are written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a dark grey, rounded rectangular background.

Check out the USACRC MMP website for some examples of active mentoring programs.

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





Snowmobile Safety

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 3 JON COTE

I grew up in central Maine, so you can imagine winter sports were an integral part of my life. With nearly six months a year of snow, I learned at a young age that snowmobiling could be a great way to get rid of those winter blues. I also learned the importance of wearing the proper personal protective equipment and being prepared for the unexpected.

I have been snowmobiling for about 30 years and made hundreds of rides without a major accident. Unfortunately, I know some people — and have heard about many more — that weren't so lucky. Like any other activity we choose to participate in, we must integrate risk management into snowmobiling



money on a quality helmet. After all, isn't your life worth it?

Next on the list is appropriate clothing, which includes everything from boots, gloves and outerwear to undergarments. A person should dress in

clothing, to include gloves/mittens and boots, must be windproof, waterproof and comfortable. Nothing will ruin a day of snowmobiling quicker than being cold, wet and miserable.

The next thing you must do is let a responsible adult know where you are going as well as your departure and return times. This is crucial in case some unplanned event happens. That way, people will know where to start looking for you. In addition, I strongly recommend always snowmobiling with a buddy. Snowmobiles are mechanical devices, which, like anything else, can break down.

Riding with a buddy is especially important if you plan to take your snowmobile off the beaten path. Too many things can go wrong. Be aware that trail conditions can change throughout the day. People have

“Riding with a buddy is especially important if you plan to take your snowmobile off the beaten path. Too many things can go wrong.”

to help ensure a safe outcome.

First and foremost we must wear our PPE — with the most important item being a helmet. The helmet must be warm, comfortable and, as with motorcycle helmets, approved by the Department of Transportation. Don't be afraid to spend a little

layers, which will allow for the ever-changing weather. I have experienced temperature fluctuations as much as 50 degrees in one day. Also, one minute it can be sunny without a cloud in the sky, and the next thing you know it's nearly blizzard conditions. Your outer



died because the frozen body of water they crossed early in the morning has now thawed and can't support the weight of their machine. Yes, you could (and should) carry a cellphone, but don't count on it to bail

you out if you find yourself in trouble. Many areas conducive to snowmobiling do not have cellphone coverage. If something does go wrong, you'll be glad you have a buddy along to help you.

I believe risk management

should be applied to every aspect of a Soldier's life, whether it be on or off duty. It is our responsibility to ourselves and our families to ensure we do everything possible to stay safe. Safer is always better. ■

Did You Know?

There are many online resources for information on snowmobiling safety. Here is some additional information to keep you safe on the snow:

- Wear a helmet and eye protection at all times. Goggles with colored lenses are indispensable on bright days. In addition, amber or yellow lenses are useful on dark days or late in the afternoon.

- Dress for the ride. The outside of your snowmobiling outfit should have a hood and be windproof and waterproof. Beneath that, dress in layers, making sure the clothing is not too tight. Thermal underwear will help insulate you from the cold. Protect your hands with snowmobiling gloves designed to allow your thumb and fingers to operate the controls. Wear rubber-bottom, leather-top boots or rubber-bottom, nylon-top boots to help keep your feet warm and improve traction. Woolen socks can help keep Jack Frost from nipping at your toes. Avoid loose clothing that could get caught on the snowmobile's moving parts.

- Do not let young or inexperienced riders operate snowmobiles without proper training and supervision.

- Do not use alcohol or other drugs when you ride.

- Learn your riding skills from an experienced rider or qualified trainer and practice them before going to the mountains.

- Always maintain a safe distance between riders.

Following too closely can lead to collisions and injuries.

- Ride with other snowmobilers and let someone who is not riding know where you're going and when you plan on returning.

- Before riding, review all local snowmobile laws and obey them.

- Check local weather conditions and dress appropriately.

- Know the terrain where you will be riding so you'll be aware of potential hazards.

- Always use the proper arm and hand signals when riding with others.

- Always ride safely and responsibly. Know your abilities and those of your snowmobile and don't exceed them.

- Make sure your equipment is in top working order before hitting the trails.

- Carry a map or a GPS receiver to help you navigate the trails. Mark your route on a map and

provide it to someone you know.

- Frequently clear the ice and snow off your snowmobile so it will run properly and others can see your lights.

- If you're going into an area where avalanches are a potential threat, get the latest avalanche forecasts and bring the proper gear and equipment.

- Be prepared for anything and use common sense.

It's also a good idea to always practice proper etiquette so you and others on the slopes and trails stay safe. Keep these tips in mind:

- Be considerate of others on the trail and keep to the right.
- Slow down when passing.
- Ride only where permitted.
- Leave gates as you found them.
- Yield right of way to animals and hikers.

- Carry out what you carry in.

- Wave and say "hello" as you pass.

- Report downed trees and trail maintenance to land managers.

- Always help those who look in need. One day, that may be you.

THE RIFT COMES



Staying safe in the cold means staying aware of your personal risk. Know your limits and plan ahead for all your activities, both on and off duty.

READY ...OR NOT?

Ready ... or Not is a call to action for leaders, Soldiers, Army Civilians and Family members to assess their “readiness” for what lies ahead—the known as well as the unknown.

Throughout our professional and personal lives, events happen all around us. We are often able to shape the outcome of those events, but many times we’re not. Navigating life’s challenges is all about decision-making.

So are **YOU** ready ... or not?



<https://safety.army.mil>



My Fight with a 30-Cent Washer

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 3 MICHAEL BUSCHMAN
Eagle Team, Operations Group
National Training Center
Fort Irwin, California



It started out like most any other night in a Balad — same mission, same timeline, same hot preflight. My co-pilot/gunner and I were to be the trail aircraft in a flight of two Apaches for yet another ground support mission over Baghdad. We conducted the preflight of our primary aircraft and then met with the crew of our lead element at the backup bird to prep it in case we had to make the inevitable jump. After our usual team update and smoke break, we got in and cranked.

Having been told by my most trusted maintenance noncommissioned officer that this would be the first flight for the aircraft after coming out of phase maintenance, I completed an extra-thorough run up, expecting the worst. Everything was flowing along smoothly and all systems were showing good-to-go. With the backup control system check complete, I started the aircraft.

Once up to 100 percent power and showing Readiness Condition-1, I called lead and waited for them to taxi to the northern “H.” I announced we were off our pad and would back-taxi and fall into their trail. With the health indicator test completed, lead called tower and we prepared

“To even get it to move at all required a lot of effort; then I needed to push it back down as soon as it would move to prevent the torque from spiking up too quickly.”

for a takeoff to the south. I pulled in collective and noticed it took a bit more effort than normal to get us off the ground, but both flight controls and the center of gravity felt normal. With lead departing and us at a 5-foot hover, I waited

for their downwash and dust to dissipate and then we were on our way — or so I expected.

The resistance on the collective was now way more severe than it had been just a few seconds earlier and it would not glide smoothly at all. To even get it to move at all required a lot of effort; then I needed to push it back down as soon as it would move to prevent the torque from spiking up too quickly. As we climbed out of our dust cloud and up to altitude behind lead, I discussed it with my front seater and asked him if he could see anything blocking the collective. He assured me all was clear and I quickly glanced around the back. Lead called to announce we were leaving the wire, and I replied, “Chalk 2, we have an issue.”

The senior pilot in command/air mission commander of the other aircraft calmly asked for an update, then suggested some troubleshooting for us to try. After checking the co-pilot/gunner crew station for any possible pens,



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pencils or Rip-It drink cans that might have gotten lodged in the collective, my co-pilot assumed the controls and I inspected my own station. With both collective control areas clear and the CPG stating he was unable to move his collective, I took the controls and instructed the other aircraft that we needed to turn around. Recognizing this could turn into a real-world emergency situation, lead quickly told me to turn back immediately then fell into trail and made the appropriate tower calls.

Being about two clicks outside the wire, we started to come up with our plan of attack. The collective is seriously binding by this time and requiring a lot of effort to move up or down. Because of it, I do not believe I would have been able to control the aircraft at a hover. Balad has a good-sized helipad on the southern end of the attack helicopter parking area and, as I had been parked at the far north end, there would be plenty of room for me to perform a roll-on landing. Alpha taxiway was clear of aircraft and had both a larger area to commit a roll-on and would also allow for quicker access of crash and rescue vehicles should they be needed. In the end, I decided on the southern "H."

On final approach, my front seater immediately started calling out my airspeed and altitude. I slowed it back to about 35 knots and made the most beautiful textbook roll-on landing by the numbers. I continued a hasty ground taxi and guided the aircraft

back to parking. Having witnessed us turn around and our "faster-than-normal" approach to the pad, my co-pilot and I were greeted by considerably more than the usual amount of ground personnel.



While starting the two-minute engine cool down, I instructed the front seater to jump out and told my trusty NCO to jump in. He threw on a headset and I told him to try pulling up on the

collective. Expecting the norm, he was shocked at how much pressure it took. With him being the muscle head he was, I was surprised when he told me how hard a time he was having and commented about not seeing how I was able to fly the damned thing.

I exited the aircraft and smoked the mandatory cigarette after shutdown, then moved my gear over to the backup bird. We carried on with the mission without incident. It was not until the next day that I was informed what had caused the problem: A 30-cent washer on the pilot station's collective guide had been installed incorrectly, not allowing it to function properly. It had been moving without incident until power was applied to pick up the aircraft, then it started cutting into the guide. Once it was correctly installed, there was no further issue.

Looking back, I am very thankful for how everything turned out. The good crew coordination between not only the front seater of my aircraft but with that of the senior PC in the lead ship allowed for this junior one to end a possibly hairy situation with nothing more than a vivid memory and some large smiles.

After the mission, the PC of the other ship advised me I coulda/shoulda used the alpha taxiway for a less extreme roll-on and should have alerted the crash and rescue personnel to meet us there. After all, they could use some practice too. All that for a little 30-cent washer. ■



Talking Trash

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 4 JAMES COBB
Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Armored Division
Fort Bliss, Texas

There I was — right in the middle of all the action as the 101st Airborne Division rolled through Iraq in its quest to remove Saddam Hussein from power. As dramatic as that may sound, we also did a lot of uninteresting tasks during my time in Iraq, such as setting up assembly areas in the middle of the desert. There's actually a lot to do on these little islands of operational activity, including feeding hungry troops, refueling helicopters and — everyone's favorite chore — trash disposal.

In the middle of the desert, however, there isn't a sanitation department that comes by every Thursday to pick up the garbage and make it magically



to be big and deep enough to keep the desert critters from digging the trash right back up. This was our first tactic, but we were never able to dig a hole big enough to accommodate the amount of garbage produced by our company of 30 Soldiers.

up with a masterfully efficient plan — we'd burn the trash every couple of days instead of filling and covering the hole every day. Everyone commended me for my genius, and the burning ritual became the standard method for trash disposal. It even provided a little entertainment for us. This method worked well until a couple of months later, when we finally moved out of our tents and into an actual building. Unfortunately, the building's indoor plumbing didn't work, so we had to continue using our two-stall outdoor shower until the repair contract came through.

“Being the brilliant young warrant officer I was, I came up with a masterfully efficient plan — we'd burn the trash every couple of days instead of filling and covering the hole every day.”

disappear like in the states. So what exactly do you do with trash in the desert? Well, you can bury it, but the hole has

When digging the hole became a full-time job, we decided there had to be a better way.

Being the brilliant young warrant officer I was, I came

It was getting close to winter, so we were all elated when the indoor shower was installed and running a few weeks later. Since we didn't need the outdoor shower anymore, our



next decision was what to do with it. The shower was now technically trash, which, in my mind, qualified it for the torch.

I consulted the first sergeant and, after he nodded his approval, excitedly gathered the materials I'd need to set the shower ablaze. The shower was constructed of several 4-by-8-foot sheets of plywood nailed to two pallets, and I didn't think it was necessary to tear it down. I thought a "small" amount of accelerant in the form of JP-8 should do the trick, so I doused the inside of the stalls, struck a match and stood back to admire my handiwork.

The fire started out small enough and was easily manageable until the wind picked up. The fire really began blazing then, and the wind caught inside the stalls and sent flames shooting 35 to 40 feet into the air. The flames attracted all sorts of attention, including that of a battalion commander about a half-mile away. The flames were so hot you could feel the heat from 50 feet back — not a good thing, considering there was an LMTV parked just 25 feet away. After the flames died down, I was relieved the only casualties were a plastic chair and my pride. Nevertheless, we learned an important lesson that day: Always respect fire!

Lessons learned

Many of our posts are remote and have limited access to firefighting and crash/rescue

FYI

Fire safety is important both on and off duty. When burning debris, consider these tips to prevent injury:

- Check local laws on burning. Some communities allow burning only during specified hours, while others forbid it entirely. Also, some items are illegal to burn.
- If you must burn debris, contact a local fire official who can recommend how to do it safely. Check the weather and don't burn on dry, windy days. Debris should be placed in a cleared area, away from any building, overhead branches and wires. Do not use gasoline or other highly flammable liquids to start a fire, and never add these liquids to an existing fire (smoldering). Always watch the fire until it is completely extinguished.

equipment, which reinforces the importance of fire extinguishers. There are three types of fire extinguishers purchased by the Army for situations like the one I found myself in. Class A extinguishers are used for ordinary combustibles such as wood and paper. Class B extinguishers are used on flammable and combustible liquids and gases. Class C extinguishers are used for energized electrical equipment.

Portable extinguishers also are rated for the size of fire they can handle. This rating is a number from 1 to 40 for Class

A fires and 1 to 640 for Class B fires. The rating is listed on the label. For example, 1A or 2A and/or 5B, 10B or 20B. The higher the number, the larger the fire the extinguisher can handle.

Once the right extinguisher is selected, it must be placed in an obvious location such as an exit or corridor. Extinguishers should be inspected periodically for serviceability, and leaders must ensure Soldiers are trained to safely use the different types of fire extinguishers found in their workplace. Live training can be performed safely with the assistance of qualified firefighting personnel; however, if this isn't possible, at a minimum, the PASS technique should be discussed.

The PASS technique is simple:

- Pull the pin
- Aim the extinguisher nozzle at the flames
- Squeeze the trigger while holding the extinguisher upright
- Sweep the extinguisher from side to side at the base of the flames

Leaders also should point out that fire extinguishers aren't used as their name implies. They're designed only to suppress a fire long enough for everyone to safely exit the area. Although I was lucky my fire died out on its own, you should never attempt to burn anything without first having the proper equipment on hand. You may burn more than your pride. ■

**Get the tools before
the road gets rough.**



Driver's Training Toolbox

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





Saved by the Helmet ... and Laptop

COL. JAMES B. BARKLEY
59th Aviation Troop
South Carolina Army National Guard
Eastover, South Carolina

By the time Nicolas Laboy slammed on his motorcycle brakes, it was already too late. The Honda CBR 600 wobbled hard and fell over, and Nicolas skidded across the road until he and the bike crunched against the pickup truck.

Nicolas doesn't remember the accident. He knows he was riding to work, but the entire memory of events has been lost in a sinkhole of his mind. For 10 days following, he lay in a hospital bed in a medically induced coma.

As he and his mother, Ilda, recalled the injuries, it took nearly five minutes to list all of them. His left leg broke in two places — both the fibula and tibia. He fractured his right foot.

“He had to remain with his stomach opened while those organs were compacted to stop the bleeding for at least three-and-a-half days. ...”

He suffered a third-degree burn across his right thigh, likely from the motorcycle exhaust pipe pressing against him on the ground. His kidney and liver were severed. His spleen ruptured.

“His internal organs were mangled. His stomach was bruised beyond belief,” Ilda



said. “He had to remain with his stomach opened while those organs were compacted to stop the bleeding for at least three-and-a-half days. ... His stomach was bruised and

his intestines were not where they should have been. They got shifted, so they had to put everything (back) into place.”

But that wasn't all.

Nicolas also fractured his shoulder at the scapula and chromium, and suffered three fractures in his spine —

lumbar one, two and three.

“It would have been worse,” Nicolas said, “but I had my backpack, which had a laptop and a cushion protecting my back. Otherwise, I probably would have been paralyzed because, I mean, a spine breaking ... you know? Yeah.”

He laughed as he listed some of his injuries, including the spine. The laughter expressed relief while disguising a hint of nerves. Still, he seemed in good spirits as he recalled the horrific details, looking much healthier than he did just months earlier.

Nicolas said with confidence that the laptop and padding saved him from paralysis. Yet, it was his motorcycle helmet that saved his life. Without that helmet, none of the other injuries would have mattered.

“The doctor told me straight up, ‘If you didn't have your helmet, you would have died instantly,’” Nicolas said. “And even with it,



I still had a broken nose and my brain was bleeding internally.”

The accident happened five months ago, one day before the Fourth of July. In a way, it’s ironic Nicolas should suffer this trauma so close to the nation’s most patriotic holiday. He joined the Army Reserve in late 2012 with a commitment to defend the country’s liberties. Instead of celebrating Independence Day with family, he lay in bed, dependent on tubes and medical professionals to keep him alive.

Adding to the irony, Nicolas had become somewhat the face of the U.S. Army Reserve in the months leading up to the accident. He had posed for an Army photo shoot in Chicago, and those images had been used widely to promote the Army Reserve. In fact, the command sergeant major of the Army Reserve — not knowing about the accident — used a portrait of Nicolas to wish everyone a happy Independence Day on Facebook. In that photo, Nicolas looks over his shoulder wearing his uniform, sporting ballistic glasses and a combat helmet.

Meanwhile, as his photo wished everyone a happy Fourth, his life was on the line, with so much medical equipment attached to him that he looked nothing like the poster image he once embodied. Yet, the Army Reserve didn’t leave him behind, forgotten. In the first few hours of the accident’s aftermath, Ilda called everyone she could think of, from

family, to co-workers and even Nicolas’ Army Reserve supervisors.

“I just remember before I could even hang up the phone, she was in front of me,” Ilda recalls, talking about Master Sgt. Dina Sharp, who was the information technology and communications (G6) noncommissioned officer in charge for the 416th Theater

“... My heart broke to see Spc. Laboy, one of my Soldiers, lying in that bed with multiple IVs and hooked up to different types of monitors,” Sharp said.”

Engineer Command at the time.

Sharp and her husband, Capt. Luc Roy, rushed to the hospital and informed their commander about Nicolas’ accident. Roy even went to the scene of the accident to take photos. He saw that things didn’t add up as described in the police report. Nicolas had been accused of crossing over into the other lane at an

intersection, causing the accident.

“(Roy) got pictures of the crash site taken by first responders that showed the true story,” Sharp said of her husband.

Those photographs helped correct inaccurate witness statements, showing Nicolas was innocent. They immediately referred the family to a friend who is a lawyer.

“I was the first person, outside of family, who was allowed back to see Nic. ... My heart broke to see Spc. Laboy, one of my Soldiers, lying in that bed with multiple IVs and hooked up to different types of monitors,” Sharp said.

Within days, Roy launched an online funding campaign that would raise more than \$35,000 to offset the costs of Nicolas’ medical expenses. Roy, Sharp and other Soldiers took to social media to promote the campaign since they couldn’t officially endorse it through military channels due to Army policy.

Both Sharp and Roy visited the hospital as much as possible. They brought Ilda water bottles and food during mealtime visits. They kept the unit informed of Nicolas’ progress so Soldiers could visit and pray for him. Soldiers invaded the hospital with get-well-soon cards and small gifts. He even received command coins from the 416th TEC and the command sergeant major of the U.S. Army Reserve.

“I’ve never seen so much love, commitment, honor, shown in my whole entire life,” Ilda said with a quivering voice and tears



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in her eyes. "The Army has totally taken my breath away. ... You guys were there for him as much as you were there for me in the worst time of our lives. My cup runneth over, sincerely."

Nicolas agrees. Those Soldiers proved not only their affection, but a type of leadership he admires.

"Going forward, it kind of shows you what an officer or a (noncommissioned officer) is supposed to be like," he said. "That is above and beyond what you're told they're supposed to do."

Nicolas also received a lot of support from his civilian work, he said. He is an IT specialist at an Aldi corporate office in Batavia, Illinois. At the time of the accident he was a temporary hire, but they are holding a contracted position for when he returns. Through the dark times of his recovery, he looks to these blessings to keep him motivated and remembers some of the funny moments in between.

After Nicolas was out of his coma, but still sedated, a one-star general from the 416th TEC visited him. Nicolas tried to lift his right arm, but he couldn't move it, so he saluted with his left, but immediately worried over the mistake.

"It was just hilarious because he was like, 'No, no, no, no! Stop! Don't move, don't move! Relax!'" Nicolas recalled, laughing.

Nicolas spent a total of six weeks in three different hospitals to treat his injuries and receive care for his recovery. He returned

RIDE FOR YOUR LIFE

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MMP
MOTORCYCLE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

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home in Bolingbrook, Illinois, in mid-August and continued with another month of physical therapy. His mother and girlfriend moved his bedroom from upstairs to an open day room on the home's first floor because he still can't make it up the steps. However, he is expected to walk again, a prognosis that seemed impossible in the first few hours after the accident. In fact, he's fortunate to still have both feet today.

"There was a threat in the beginning," his mother said. "He couldn't get circulation at the bottom of his left foot, so I had to choose whether to save his kidney or save his foot."

As later explained, Nicolas needed a CT scan which uses a dye that allows X-rays to map out his arteries and blood flow down to the foot. However, the dye is hard on the kidneys, one of which had been badly damaged

during the accident. In order to do the scan to save the foot, Nicolas might lose the kidney. Ilda chose to save the foot at the sacrifice of the kidney, but as it turns out the kidney survived as well.

Now, Nicolas has the hope of walking again. He was planning on attending Army battle assembly at the unit in November, and might move around free of his wheelchair and walker soon after.

The thing keeping him back from a speedier recovery is the open burn on his right thigh. It hurts to touch or when it rubs against something when he moves. Yet, as he feels the burn on his thigh keeping him back, he also feels the burn of life calling him to move forward. It wasn't just the helmet and laptop that saved his body, but also the love of Soldiers that encouraged him and his family through that journey of recovery. ■

HERE IT COMES

Are you ready to pull the trigger?

- Always point the muzzle in a safe direction.
- Never point a firearm or bow at anything you do not intend to shoot.
- Always keep the safety on until you are ready to fire; however, the safety should never be a substitute for safe firearm handling.

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<https://safety.army.mil>



Who's Flying the Aircraft?

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 ADAM EPLEY
1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment
Fort Bragg, North Carolina

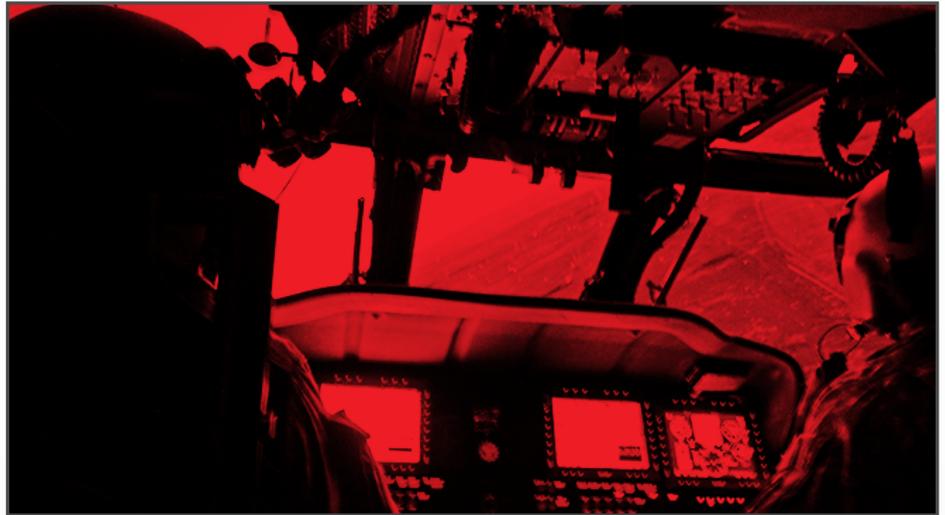
I showed up at my first assignment as an aviator right as we were headed out the door for a deployment in Regional Command East. I was excited and nervous. My Readiness Level 3 to 2 progression took two flights and suddenly I was flying combat missions with my troop standardization pilot. Flight school had given me just enough experience to make me dangerous, so there were good days where I was nearly competent, and bad days where I was a liability in the cockpit.

Our SP and commander decided the best place for me was on one of our night shifts at a time of day when the enemy was less active, allowing me to get more experience before throwing me into the fray. It was on one of these early morning flights that I nearly killed us.

We were departing the forward arming and refueling point. I was

“I released the controls, thinking that he'd taken them back, even though we hadn't positively transferred them. At this point, no one was flying the aircraft.”

in the left seat, doing my best to run the mast mounted sight, when appropriate, and trying to change radios when needed. My SP needed to adjust his goggles and transferred the controls. Now I was flying, brand



new, almost zero illumination.

Our trail aircraft was talking with our SP about what our plan was for the rest of the mission when his floor mic got stuck. He couldn't stop transmitting, so he was in the right seat, stomping on the floor and trying to fix the problem. We climbed out of the departure end when trail came over our alternate

internal radio frequency, asking if everything is all right. I reached forward to change my radio, but not having much experience flying in a full kit, the body armor and magazines I had strapped to my

chest pushed the cyclic forward, so much that I put us in a 500-foot-per-minute rate of descent.

My SP realized what I'd done and yanked back on the cyclic, arresting the descent. I released the controls, thinking that he'd taken them back, even though we hadn't positively transferred them. At this point, no one was flying the aircraft. He told me to make a correction, which confused me, since I thought he was flying. We both realized what was going on at the same time, at which point, he took the controls and flew us back to the parking area. We were done for the day.

This experience has been shared as part of my crew brief every time I fly with a new pilot. My unfamiliarity with my gear, coupled with my inexperience as a junior aviator put us in a dangerous situation and could have easily gotten us killed. I got a red “U” in my records that day, but, fortunately, we didn't damage the aircraft and lived to fly another day. ■

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