



THIS MONTH DECEMBER 2016



License to Drive

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I was an 18-year-old private when I arrived at my first duty station at Camp Casey, South Korea, in the fall of 1996. Shortly after reporting, my leadership sent me to the 40-hour driver training course managed by the installation. Several days after completing the first phase of the course, I learned my unit was about to depart on a training exercise. I

also discovered we had a severe shortage of licensed operators.

In response to that shortage, my section leader brought me to the company master driver to complete the second phase of my licensing process. As we walked up to the gate of the motor pool, the weathered NCO looked at me and asked, "Well, can you drive?" My response was typical of an 18-year-old kid: "Of course I can drive, sergeant!" I couldn't think of any other answer. After all, my first car was a 1968 Chrysler

Newport, so I was accustomed to driving a "tank." I had also just graduated advanced individual training at the top of my class, so I felt like I could conquer the world.

With a few quick swipes of his Skilcraft pen on my DA 348, I was licensed on the M998 HMMWV, M923 5-ton truck, M113A3 Armored Personnel Carrier and M88A1 Recovery Vehicle. The only vehicle in this group I was actually proficient with was the M88A1 because I spent two weeks driving it during the ASI-H8

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recovery school at Fort Knox, Kentucky. I had no clue how to operate the rest of the vehicles, but my license clearly stated I was certified to the Army standard.

I am sure many of you reading this have witnessed similar experiences and can relate to how quickly Soldiers are licensed when there is an urgent training event or deployment. This was my first impression of the Army's Driver Training Program. And throughout my 20-plus-year career, I have heard and seen similar abuses of the licensing process.

Over the years I have spoken with Soldiers and leaders that told me how the qualifications on their DA 348 were pencil-whipped or falsified. These falsified licenses often occurred during a deployment or early in their careers and followed them to their next duty station. Unknown to leaders, Soldiers often report to their new unit with a DA 348 that states they are licensed according to the Army standard. However, the reality was quite different.

Below is a quick list of pointers to help engaged and proactive leaders revamp and standardize their unit's driver training program:

- Send your 88M30/40 NCOs to attend the ASI M9 course at Fort Lee, Virginia, or request a mobile training

team come to your location. These NCOs are certified by the Transportation School to oversee your brigade or battalion driver training programs and are the principal advisers to the commander.

- Appoint high-performing NCOs (in writing) to be the unit driver instructors at the company level and have one or two per platoon. These NCOs will be the Soldiers to road test and certify training completion prior to adding qualifications on the DA 348. It is highly recommended they attend the local Master Driver Course because the instructors should understand the licensing policy in accordance with Army Regulation 600-55 and local standard operating procedures thoroughly.

- Discuss the driver training strategy at company training meetings and the quarterly training brief. Giving this topic command influence and resourcing is the greatest tool to providing Soldiers with quality training.

- Conduct audits of all driver training records to ensure they match the qualifications with SAMS1-E or in GCSS-Army. Charge the master driver and unit driver instructors with realistic timeframes to conduct this audit, and develop a glide path to bring your

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Mission Statement:

The Army Safety Team provides the Army with safety and risk management expertise to preserve readiness through the prevention of accidental loss of our Soldiers, Civilians, Families and vital resources.



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organization in compliance.

- Ensure refresher training, annual check rides, night vision device training, rollover drills and water fording are all incorporated on the unit training calendar and executed to standard.

- Insist your company commanders conduct the driver interviews themselves and use it as an opportunity to get to know their Soldiers. Commanders should use this time to speak with their Soldiers about the importance of responsible driving and safe vehicle operations.

- Use the tools and resources available at your location. Reaching out to your battalion maintenance warrant officer/NCO, support operations, G4 and COMET team are all great places to start.

- Use the myriad of resources located at the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center's Driver's Training Toolbox (<https://safety.army.mil/ON-DUTY/DriversTrainingToolbox.aspx>) to develop a training program. The Transportation Corps webpage (http://www.transportation.army.mil/ADSO/ADSO_index.htm) and the TACOM UTAP website (<https://utap.army.mil/ItemDetails.aspx?Id=963>) also have a lot of training information available.

In addition, a wealth of information can be found by searching for "driver training" on the UTAP website.

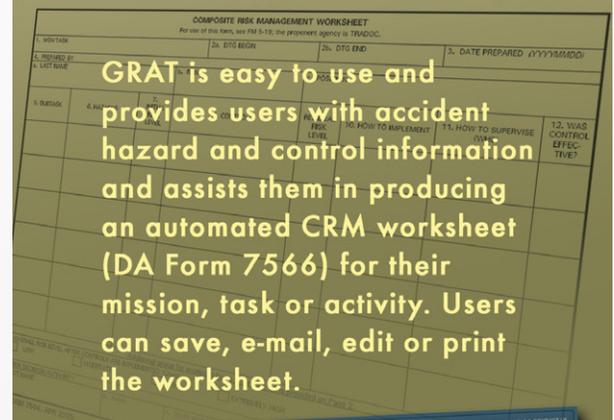
Improper Soldier training and licensing is often overlooked until there is an accident. Engaged leaders should understand driver training is imperative for Soldier safety, preserves the nation's investment in our combat and tactical vehicles, and facilitates long-term mission accomplishment. Army vehicles are growing increasingly complex, and leaders have the express responsibility to ensure we have done everything possible to train our Soldiers to standard before issuing a license. ■



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Why Training Matters

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I have always been an advocate for the Motorcycle Mentorship Program and Advanced Motorcycle Education Program. The lessons I've learned from fellow riders and the reinforcement of positive riding habits have been useful on more than one occasion. The event I share in this article is a perfect example.

Over the past Memorial Day weekend, I traveled on a mileage pass to Narrowsburg, New York, to enjoy an event in the Catskill Mountains. The trip was very scenic, relaxing and enjoyable, making it easy to just clear my mind and only think about riding my motorcycle. Due to a storm traveling up the East Coast, though, I decided to leave the event a day early.

On my return trip, I was at mile marker 128.7 on I-95, just past Fredericksburg, Virginia, when I felt a light shimmy in the motorcycle as if it was on a grated surface. I changed lanes to see if maybe the road had a slight groove that I had not noticed. The bike seemed fine, but then I felt it again and decided to exit off the interstate at Harley of Richmond just down the road.



As I was formulating my exit plan, the rear tire began to wobble, causing the back end to drift noticeably. The speed

“... attending training annually allows us to continually refine our skills and maintain good habits while preventing the development of bad habits.”

limit on that stretch of road is 70 mph, which is what I was doing in the center lane of the three-lane highway. Realizing something had gone wrong, I turned on my right signal, released the throttle and moved onto the right shoulder. The

motorcycle slowly came to a stop. When I dismounted, I noticed the bike had a flat rear tire.

A group of riders that just departed Rolling Thunder witnessed the event and pulled off the highway with me. One rider, who happened to be a teacher at an advanced rider school in North Carolina, said he figured he would

be calling 911 and not just a tow truck for me. He added that a lot of motorcyclists make the fatal mistake of applying their brakes when they lose traction. Thanks to my repeated Basic RiderCourse 2 and Advanced RiderCourse training, I fought the



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urge to use my brake. I just let the bike glide to a stop.

Later, a bike shop removed the tire to discover the inner tube and tire tape had actually melted into one big lump. The motorcycle is a 2016 with only 5,000 miles on it, and the rear tire had just been replaced by the dealer 3,000 miles earlier due to damage from some debris I had run over near my workplace.

The most important takeaway from this event for me — and any other rider — was attending training annually allows us to continually refine our skills and maintain good habits while preventing the development of bad habits. So, why attend motorcycle training annually? Because traveling down the highway at 70 mph and your back tire starts to wobble is not the time to discover the wrong thing to do. ■

Editor's note: The author is a brigade motorcycle mentor.

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

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

<https://safety.army.mil>





A Safety Valve

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It was June at Self Army Airfield at Fort Polk, Louisiana, and I was almost through my second Joint Readiness Training Center rotation of the summer. I was a new pilot in command and, despite being at JRTC in June, enjoying the flight time.

Toward the end of a 12-hour quick-reaction force shift, I was asked to move one of our Black Hawks from the maintenance pad to our company parking area. We were in a bit of a hurry to get the aircraft back to the pad so the maintenance test pilot could perform the post-phase checks and have it ready to fly for the night shift.

After arriving at the UH-60, as is typical, we split up the preflight duties. The other pilot performed the preflight checks on the bottom of the aircraft, and I performed the preflight checks on the top. Because the pilot in command is ultimately responsible for everything that happens on board the aircraft, and since the aircraft was coming out of maintenance, I wanted our crew chief to go over the systems up top to double-check everything was as it should be. So, I left the hydraulic cover forward, the engine cowlings open and the oil



cooler doors open and unlatched. To climb back over the blades, however, I closed the oil cooler doors but left them unlatched.

The crew chief went up top, performed his checks and closed the hydraulic deck and engine cowlings. Unfortunately, he did not notice the oil cooler door was not latched. In my haste, I also forgot to check, or even ask the crew chief to double-check all the latches on top of the aircraft were properly fastened. The UH-60 checklist clearly states:

COCKPIT – RIGHT SIDE (AREA 8).

4. Ensure all access covers and maintenance platforms are closed and checked.

The run-up went without incident, and after calling the tower, we repositioned to the side of the runway for an engine power check. While we were running the check, the battalion maintenance officer approached the aircraft and told the crew

chief that the oil cooler door had flapped open and we needed to shut down to check for damage. I knew almost instantly exactly what had happened and I was furious with myself.

After shutting down, the crew chief went up top and verified the door was indeed unlatched. The maintenance officer then contacted the battalion safety officer and a technical inspector so they could take a look at the oil cooler doors and airframe. The battalion commander was also notified of the incident.

I stood by nervously while the inspection took place. In my mind, my PC orders and impending safety course reservation and PCS hung in the balance. Finally, the technical inspector declared he found no damage. After some mentoring from the battalion maintenance officer, and with the permission of the battalion commander, we were cleared to



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finish moving the aircraft to the parking area. Thankfully there was no damage to the aircraft and no one was injured.

Of course, there were still consequences. My PC orders were suspended for 14 days and I was only allowed to fly briefly as a pilot during that timeframe, missing out on valuable experience. But had I been flying a mission instead of just relocating the aircraft on the flight line, the potential consequences of this incident could have been much more severe. The door repeatedly slamming against the airframe, or a detached door encountering the tail or main rotor, could have resulted in serious damage or death. I'll take my punishment over those any day of the week.

Lessons learned

I've taken three lessons from this incident.

1. Always fully close and latch any panel you open on preflight. If maintenance is required, they can open it again.
2. Always follow and review the preflight checklist when duties have been performed separately by individual crewmembers.
3. Always perform a detailed walk-around and latch check, and have another crewmember double-check the latches before climbing into the aircraft.

The last step of the preflight check, and the practice of reviewing the checklist, will prevent the type of incident I experienced. It's a safety valve to ensure that even in a rush the aircraft is ready for safe flight. ■

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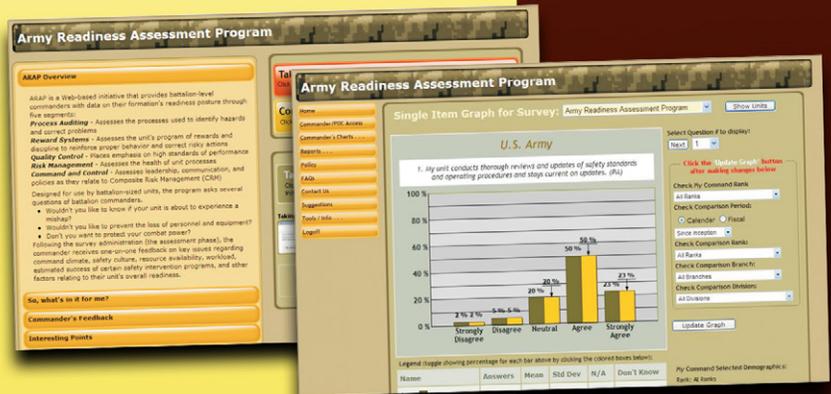
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Dying Breath

RETIRED MASTER SGT. ED ROLOFF
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Twinsburg, Ohio

On a snowy night in Hamburg, New York, a motorist struck an electrical pole near Dave Johnson's home, causing a power outage. Due to the foul weather and late hour, the power company would not be able to repair service to the area for at least four to six hours. "No big deal," Dave thought. Like most Hamburg residents, he was accustomed to frequent power outages during the winter and owned a gas-powered generator.

Despite the manufacturer's warning, Dave set up the generator inside his attached garage (with the garage door open). Early the next morning, when the power was restored, Dave walked out into the garage to turn off the generator. When he walked back into the house, he stumbled, fell, vomited and then passed out. Dave's wife, Lisa, came out of the bedroom to investigate the commotion and also stumbled and fell. She yelled for her oldest daughter, who called 911 when she found her parents on the floor. The entire family was transported



to the local emergency room.

So what happened? Dave, Lisa and their two daughters were victims of carbon monoxide poisoning. Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that

can build up in enclosed or semi-enclosed spaces, poisoning the people and animals breathing it.

The most common symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness,

nausea, vomiting, chest pain and confusion. High levels of carbon monoxide ingestion can cause loss of consciousness and death. Since many of these symptoms are

“Unlike a smoke detector, where you can easily confirm the cause of the alarm, carbon monoxide is invisible and odorless, so it’s harder to tell if an alarm is false or a real emergency.”

can cause sudden illness and death. It is found in combustion fumes such as those produced by vehicles, small gasoline engines, stoves, lanterns, burning charcoal and wood, and gas ranges and heating systems. The carbon monoxide from these sources

similar to those of the flu, food poisoning or other illnesses, some victims may not realize carbon monoxide poisoning could be the cause of their problems.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is the result of the gas invading the blood stream. Red blood



FYI

According to study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, January is the worst month for carbon monoxide poisoning.

cells absorb carbon monoxide quicker than they absorb oxygen. If there is a high quantity in the air, the body may replace the oxygen in the blood with carbon monoxide. This blocks oxygen from getting into the body, which can damage tissues and result in death. People who are sleeping or intoxicated can die from carbon monoxide poisoning before ever experiencing symptoms.

If you experience any of the symptoms associated with carbon monoxide poisoning, get fresh air immediately. Then go to an emergency room and tell the physician you suspect you're suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning. If carbon monoxide poisoning has occurred, it can often be diagnosed by a blood test conducted soon after exposure. The treatment is high-dose oxygen, usually administered through a facemask attached to a reserve bag. In severe cases, a hyperbaric pressure chamber, if available, may be used to provide

even higher doses of oxygen.

There is nothing wrong with using a portable generator during an emergency, but it must be used wisely and in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications. When used in a confined space, generators can produce high levels of carbon monoxide within minutes. Here are some safety tips for using a portable generator:

- Never use a generator inside homes, garages, crawlspaces, sheds or similar areas, even when using fans or opening doors and windows for ventilation.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions that come with the generator.
- Locate the unit outdoors and far from doors, windows and vents that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors.
- Install battery-operated carbon monoxide detectors/alarms or plug-in carbon monoxide alarms with a battery back-up in your home, according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Some advice on carbon monoxide detectors: Don't let buying one lull you into a false sense of security. Preventing carbon monoxide from becoming a problem in your home is better than relying on an alarm. Also, do some research on the features of several different detectors and don't select one solely on the basis of cost. Non-governmental organizations such as Consumers Union (publisher of Consumer Reports), the American Gas Association and Underwriters Laboratories can help you make an informed decision. It is important for you to know that the technology of carbon monoxide detectors is still developing. While there are several types on the market, they are not generally considered to be as reliable as the smoke detectors found in homes. Unlike a smoke detector, where you can easily confirm the cause of the alarm, carbon monoxide is invisible and odorless, so it's harder to tell if an alarm is false or a real emergency.

After their carbon monoxide scare, Dave and Lisa spent four days in the hospital receiving high-dose oxygen treatment inside a hyperbaric chamber. Their daughters were treated with high-dose oxygen through a facemask and discharged after two days. Dave learned a valuable lesson on the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning, and he and his family received a very precious gift — life! ■

Did You Know?

Carbon monoxide exposure accounts for an estimated 15,000 emergency room visits and 500 deaths in the United States each year.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Danger on the Slope

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Utah claims to have the greatest snow on Earth, and with that assertion comes some inherent risks. The high mountains and snow increase the avalanche danger, and each year the state experiences multiple fatalities. Fortunately, there are many things that can be done to mitigate the risks.

On Feb. 5, 2012, at about 5 p.m., an avalanche occurred west of Lost Creek Reservoir in Sevier County, Utah, located on the Fishlake National Forest. This was not the first avalanche in the area, but it had been about 10 years since there was a fatality. The snowmobilers were familiar with the area and had been riding all day. It was getting late so they decided to head home.

They were traveling west on the trail, which followed the approximate path of Forest Road 056, named Sweetwater Road. This was the trail the riders used earlier that day to get to the area. The riders were traveling single file along the road that traversed the north face of the slope when an avalanche broke loose.

The slide area was about a quarter-mile wide and 400 feet long. The first rider was about three-quarters of the way



across the slope when he felt the snow give way underneath the snowmobile. He turned the snowmobile downhill and was able to outrun the avalanche to a flat below the slide area. The second rider was about halfway across the slope when he was knocked off the snowmobile by the avalanche. He was carried about 50 feet down the slope and buried under 4 feet of snow. The third and fourth riders were not on the slope when the avalanche hit.

The three riders turned their beacons to "search" and started looking for their buried friend. After about an hour of unsuccessfully searching, one of the riders rode to a location where he had cellphone service and called for the local search

and rescue patrol. Soon after the rider returned, the group was able to spot a little piece of the trapped rider's snowmobile sticking out of the snow. The buried rider was found shortly thereafter, but it was too late.

The following morning, I had the opportunity to assist the Utah Avalanche Center with the investigation into this fatality. We rode to the avalanche site and were accompanied by a few members of the Sevier County Search and Rescue that were part of the recovery efforts the night before. The site was an area I had been to many times before, both on a snowmobile and during the summertime. The location was popular with snowmobilers because the steep, treeless slopes are great for climbing.



All four riders involved in the avalanche the day prior were familiar with the area. They had the proper protective equipment, to include avalanche beacons, in case disaster struck. The beacons give off a radio transmission that others can use to locate it. All beacons can both transmit and receive by switching modes. They will also give you a strength signal, letting you know whether you're getting closer or farther away from the lost rider.

A buried rider has about 15 minutes before they die from suffocation. That doesn't give rescuers much time. It can be even more challenging if the avalanche is large, so it's vital that you know how to use a beacon, probe and shovel. The local avalanche centers are a great place to find information and classes on how to use the equipment. They will also give you the avalanche forecast on the local conditions.

So, before you go into the backcountry skiing, snowmobiling or snowshoeing, ensure you have the proper equipment, know how to use it and understand the avalanche danger level. Knowing the conditions of the snow, wearing tracking beacons and protective equipment, and knowing how to use the beacons are a few things that lower the risk. ■

Avalanche safety tips

According to the U.S. Forest Service's National Avalanche Center, avalanches kill more people on national forests than any other natural hazard. The organization offers the following tips to help skiers, snowmobilers and snowshoers stay safe:

- **Be responsible.** Your safety and the safety of others around you is your primary responsibility. What you wear, where you go, the equipment you carry and how you conduct yourself is vitally important.

- **Be avalanche savvy.** Know the three conditions — slope, snowpack and trigger — present for an avalanche. Take a certified avalanche course. Find courses at Avalanche.org.

- **Be aware.** Know the avalanche danger/conditions where you will be recreating. Heed all warnings.

- **Be prepared.** Have at least these three safety items with you at all times and know how to use them. Everyone in your party should carry each of these items:

- ~ **Avalanche transceiver** –

Know the terrain and avoid dangerous conditions. If you are caught in an avalanche, use your avalanche transceiver to help others in your party find you.

- ~ **Avalanche probes** – These collapsible poles are longer than ski poles and are the perfect tool to begin searching for someone buried under the snow.

- ~ **Shovel** – Each person in your party should carry a shovel. Shovels can help you dig out others who may be caught in an avalanche, help determine snowpack conditions, assist in leveling out an area for a tent, or be used to melt snow for drinking water.

- ~ **Backpack** – Your pack should hold all your rescue gear, food, water, dry clothing, first-aid kit and tools to take with you when you go into the backcountry.

- ~ **Partner** – None of the above pieces of equipment will help you if you venture into the backcountry alone. Always bring a buddy.



Transfer the Controls

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I was a pilot in command with more than 850 hours and about 175 NVG hours flying with my company standardization pilot, who had triple the amount of hours. We had two experienced crew chiefs in the back. We were Chalk 2 on a flight of two aircraft flying a night mission to multiple forward operating bases in Afghanistan. Our company was in the middle of change-of-command inventories and part of the mission was to fly our incoming and outgoing commanders to several FOBs so they could conduct inventories for the equipment handover.

The weather was briefed as clear throughout the flight until the last portion, which called for low ceilings at a mountain pass. We all agreed that if we sped up the inventories, we could beat the incoming weather that would block us from going through the pass to make it back home. We had been flying with the current commander in Chalk 1 and our incoming commander in our aircraft with no issues. We were an hour ahead when inventories were completed at the last FOB. The weather brief was a go with ceilings broken at 8,000 feet. But if we wasted any more time, it could become an issue.



The last portion of the flight was during the night, so we were flying back to the house under night vision goggles. I was on the controls, sitting front right, and everything was going great. We were staggered left with a three-to-five-disk separation, leveled about 6,000 mean sea level.

I noticed the ceilings started to get lower and lower the farther we flew toward the pass, and the visibility wasn't any better. Our initial solution was to slow down, get a little lower to avoid the layer of clouds and tighten up the formation so we didn't lose Chalk 1. Both aircrews had flown this route multiple times under red illum conditions and were very familiar with it. However, as we got closer to the pass, the terrain we could normally see from a long distance wasn't clear. Throughout the flight, I looked under my goggles to see if I could make out any ground lights that

could help us assess the current weather conditions. With the last check, I noticed the goggles were starting to help me see though some of the obstruction.

In my cockpit we started discussing turning around and how comfortable the crew felt. We communicated the idea to Chalk 1, and they said they could still make out terrain features. They were comfortable to proceed though the pass if we are good, so we continued.

As we entered the pass, we were as slow and low as we could go. The ceiling or visibility wasn't getting any worse or better, and we could still make out the terrain and Chalk 1 and their infrared lights. I saw Chalk 1 make a slight right turn as we entered, so I started my turn as well, keeping Chalk 1 at my 2 o'clock. During our standard rate turn, however, I started to notice I could barely see the airframe features of Chalk



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1 or their IR lights. I knew that going through this pass, with high terrain on both sides, we would not be turning too much.

Within seconds of leveling out after of our turn, the visibility started to become a factor to the point that I could no longer make out the entire portion of the airframe. But I could still see Chalk 1's IR lights. I expressed to the cockpit that I could barely see Chalk 1, and my right-side crew chief stated the same. I was reaching my comfort threshold and announced to the crew I was inadvertent. I then started my climb even though Chalk 1 had not announced inadvertent yet.

Before I could transition to my instruments, I started to experience spatial disorientation. My head was concentrating at the aircraft at my two o'clock but it felt like it was going another way, and I had that overwhelming

tumbling feeling. When I transitioned to my instruments, I noticed I was in slow bank, out of trim, so I slowed down.

What do I do now? Do I let my Alpha male attitude get the best of me and try to recover the aircraft on my own with an aircraft full of passengers just to show my SP and new commander I am a high-speed pilot? Or do give up the controls and look weak? At the same time, right before entering the slight right turn in the pass, my SP announced the weather was not what we were briefed and he was going to tell Chalk 1 to turn around. As soon as he looked back up from switching his selector switch to talk to Chalk 1, I heard him say, "\$#*%!" It was too late to turn around; we were in the soup.

I leveled the aircraft as best as I could. I then started my climb and said, "I am going inadvertent and

you've got to take the controls. I am experiencing SD." My SP took the controls, continue the climb and leveled the aircraft. It took me about a five full seconds to recovery from my SD, which seemed like five minutes. Once I was back in action, I was able to help announce corrections on the cockpit indicators and punch in the emergency approach on the FMS to the nearest FOB, which was less than 10 miles away.

Once we were out of the pass, it was VFR weather and we were able to get back home with no issues. During our after-action review, I was commended for giving up the controls while suffering SD and fighting the urge to do everything on my own. Sometimes, swallowing your pride is necessary to ensure a good outcome to a bad situation. ■



THE RISK COMES



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Avoiding Winter Wipeouts

VERONIQUE HAUSCHILD
U.S. Army Public Health Center
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The silver lining to the shorter, colder days of winter is the snow and the outdoor sports typically reserved for this time of year. Winter activities such as skiing, snowboarding, snowmobiling, sledding and ice skating provide fun, excitement, fresh air and good exercise for all ages. Unfortunately, every year these activities also result in hundreds of thousands of injuries, as well as many deaths, in the U.S.

Injuries occur in both recreational and professional athletes alike. The growing popularity of skiing and snowboarding are now a focus of scientific study as emergency rooms see increases in the number and severity of injuries. A recent study of fall-related injuries in the active-duty Army showed snowboarding and skiing were the leading sports causing such injuries. Many of these injuries occurred during military-unit organized events. Military personnel need to be aware of the injury types, factors that increase the risk of injury and ways to reduce chances of injury.

Injury types

A particular concern is that at



least 15 to 20 percent of winter sports injuries involve head trauma, including concussions and mild to severe traumatic

“Recreational skiers and snowboarders are more likely to experience more severe injuries than those experienced by professionals.”

brain injuries. Injuries to the head and spine are the ones most commonly associated with fatalities, and two-thirds of the head injuries are estimated to be mild TBIs.

Overall, though, bone fractures are the most frequently reported type of injury associated with

winter sports. During skiing, injuries to the lower parts of the leg and foot — including the knee and ankle — are the most

common. These include fractures as well as sprains or ligament tears in joints such as thumbs or the anterior cruciate ligament of the knee. Snowboard fractures are more often to the wrist and hand, as well as the arm and clavicle.

Some data suggests possible long-term impairments from winter sports injuries.

Cold weather injuries such as frostbite and hypothermia are also reported — especially in conjunction with snowmobiling injuries when accidents can occur in unpatrolled or unmonitored areas. Other conditions



considered less severe, but which can still limit further activity and require extended rest, include muscle strains and soreness, dehydration, snow blindness and sunburn.

Factors associated with injury risk

Several studies evaluated winter sports injuries for potential factors associated with higher risk of injury or greater injury severity. Because skiing and snowboarding are associated with the highest numbers of severe injuries, they are the most studied.

The numbers and severity of injuries appear higher at the start of the season. Recreational skiers and snowboarders are more likely to experience more severe injuries than those experienced by professionals. However, even professionals experience injuries requiring four to six weeks of recovery.

More males experience injuries than females, especially those in their late teens to mid-20s. Though nuances of the type of skiing or snowboarding — such as speed races, freestyle and snowboard cross — have some different patterns of injury types, increased risks appear more associated with improper use or lack of protective equipment and exceeding one's experience or skill level.

Reducing your chance of injury

Though there are risks, winter sports can be an exhilarating and

fun form of healthy exercise. It is important to do what you can to reduce the risk of incurring winter sports-related injuries by following best practice guidelines below.

- Wear a helmet. It is the primary evidence-supported means to reduce the risk of severe head injuries.

- Wear wrist guards — especially when snowboarding — to reduce the risk of wrist fractures.

- Wear other appropriate clothing/equipment such as boots and goggles.

- Check that equipment works before each use; test your board or ski bindings.

- Know your experience/skill level as well as the terrain.

- ~ Seek proper training or certifications.

- ~ Try more complicated slopes or techniques only after practicing.

- ~ If at a new location, start slow and easy until the terrain is familiar.

- Be wary of poor trail design and unknown, unmaintained areas.

- ~ Use official designated groomed and patrolled trails and sports areas as opposed to "backyard" private lands.

- ~ Be aware that even some maintained slopes or trails may have "black spots," areas known for conditions that have resulted in repeated or high numbers of injuries — merging slopes, a narrowing or sharp-turning

trail, and poor grooming.

- Physically condition your body at the start of the season or when attempting new techniques or equipment.

- ~ Do exercises to prepare your body for the less stable lower body movements required of many winter sports.

Examples include lower body muscle exercises — squats and lunges, balance/stability balls, wobble boards, agility moves and shuttle drills.

- ~ Slowly progress in level of intensity and time and ensure rest breaks.

- Be prepared by following the above guidance and also remember to:

- ~ Wear layers of clothing to keep warm and dry, including socks and gloves. Replace wet items or layers as soon as possible.

- ~ Use sun protection — UVA/UVB sunglasses and SPF15+ for exposed skin and lips.

- ~ Stay hydrated.

- ~ Keep a phone/radio as a means to contact help.

- Be a good leader.

- ~ Emphasize the safe practices described above.

- ~ Enforce the use of proper procedures and protective gear.

For more information, contact the Army Public Health Center's Injury Prevention Program at usarmy.apg.medcom-phc.mbx.injuryprevention@mail.mil. ■

HERE IT COMES

Are you ready
for winter
sports?



- Warm up before hitting the slopes
- Wear the proper protective gear
- Dress in layers
- Take frequent breaks to avoid dehydration and overheating
- Watch the weather

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>



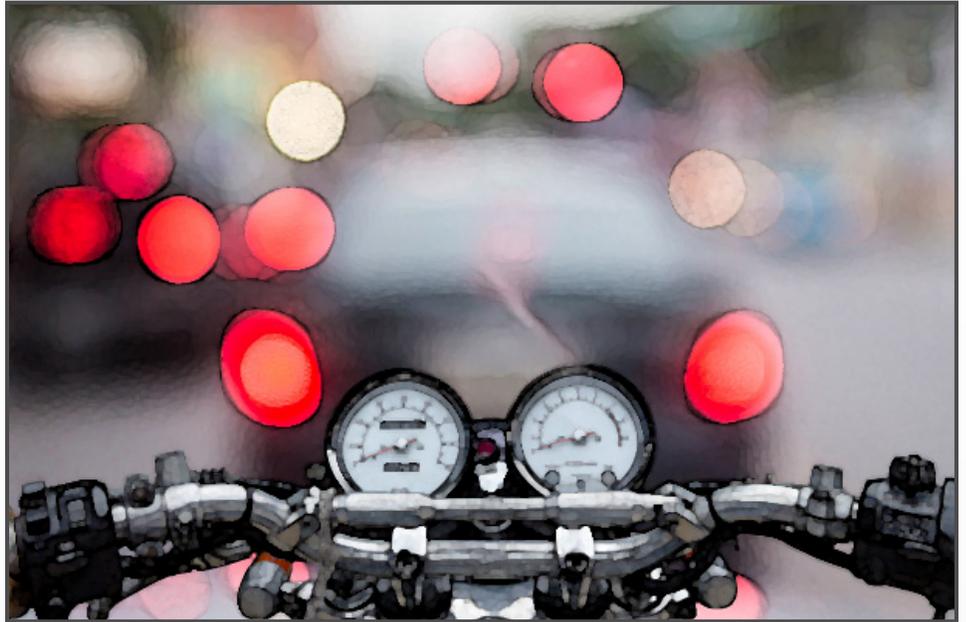
Drive Like You're on a Motorcycle

JOSH BLUNDELL
Installation Safety Office
White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico

Have you ever been in a situation where you weren't paying attention to the road or anything else going on around you? For whatever reason — maybe you were on a familiar route or distracted by something inside your vehicle — most of us have displayed some amount of inattention on the roadway. Unfortunately, in my case, it resulted in me having to pay to replace the bumper on a 2004 Mustang and the hood on my vehicle.

It was my first day of college, and I was driving to my class. Traffic was heavy and there were a lot of people walking on the sidewalks — most noticeably, college girls. Yes, I was distracted and didn't notice the Mustang ahead of me had stopped. It was an expensive lesson learned.

While the cause of the distraction may vary, I'd guess most of us either have an accident or close-call story we could share. So what's the solution to distracted driving? I truly believe we could solve a lot of our problems by always driving our vehicles like we're riding a motorcycle. Some of you are probably asking, "What does that even mean?" Well, let me tell you.



When I turned 21, I bought a Honda CBR600RR. Immediately afterward, I registered for the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's Basic RiderCourse at Fort Bliss, Texas. This course provided me with the tools I needed to stay safe on the road. After riding for a few months, however, I realized that while I could be doing everything right, I could still be taken out by an inattentive motorist. It seems a lot of drivers just don't seem to notice the motorcyclists with whom they share the road. Therefore, it's up to us, the riders, to be extra vigilant at all times.

If you've never ridden on a motorcycle before, you'll need to use your imagination to see my point — but give this a try. Next time you are behind the wheel of

your vehicle, try to imagine that the doors, roof, floorboard and framework have been removed. Also pretend you have no seat belt to protect you. Did your awareness of everything around you spike about 100 percent? If not, you would probably be dead if you really were on a motorcycle! I'm sure this might be difficult for some of you. But if you could only try to do what I am suggesting, then just maybe you will be ready for that potential hazard — and potential accident — that isn't easily recognized.

As a motorcycle rider, I've had my share of close calls. There've been a couple times when people have come into my lane just as I am trying to pass their vehicle. When those close calls happened, it shot fear through me and got



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my heart pounding. Those were near misses, and I treat them all as teachable moments.

While I no longer own a motorcycle (I sold it to help pay off my student loans), I'm thankful for the skills I picked up as a rider. I believe it truly made me a better driver. Every time I get behind the wheel of my vehicle, it's like I am back on my CBR. I'm constantly aware of everything happening around me. You should give it a try too. You might be surprised just how much safer you are on the road. ■



**Perception
is everything.**

Vehicle drivers and motorcycle riders perceive distance, speed and potential hazards differently. Stay aware, be courteous and share the road.

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



<https://safety.army.mil>



How a Hot Pocket Feels

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Iowa Army National Guard
Davenport, Iowa

Whenever I hear about lightning-related injuries in the military or civilian community, I always share my experience. My hope is that it provides a little awareness about the dangers of a potentially deadly natural phenomenon.

When going through pre-mobilization exercises at Camp Atterbury, Indiana, in June 2010, I learned that while the area wasn't as prone to out-of-the-blue storms like those seen in the Southeastern states, the weather could go from pleasant to deadly in what seemed like a matter of minutes. On this particular day, the weather started out pretty normal. We were conducting FARP operations for UH-60s in an open field adjacent to the airfield and had everything set up and running.

Our metal-framed modular tent for weather protection was set up near a tree on the high ground, and we had a HMMWV parked next to it for radio operations with aircraft. To make monitoring transmissions easier, we ran an auxiliary speaker from the HMMWV into the tent. Not that it's imperative, but we were running a two-point "Y"



setup with a HEMTT, and the pilots flying the aircraft were doing their best to land directly on top of a 5-gallon water can we had anchored as a landing marker.

Early in the afternoon it was quite evident a storm was

"If you don't have an accurate weather forecast or radar in the field, you can always follow the 30-30 Rule."

building. As it continued to grow and move closer, communication was constant with operations about our distance to lightning strikes in the area. Once strikes were within 10 miles, I and another NCO sent the rest of the team back to the barracks. He and

I stayed behind to defuel the lines and close the windows on the tent and HMMWV. Just as we had everything closed up, the skies opened to a torrential downpour.

Rather than get drenched, we took shelter in the tent. Honestly, the dangers of lightning weren't even on my mind. I was more concerned with staying dry rather than making the trek across an open

field to the barracks. But things were about to get interesting.

As we watched Mother Nature's deluge, my hair started to stand up on the back of my neck. (Just FYI, this is an indicator that a close lightning strike is imminent.) Before I knew what was



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happening, there was a blinding flash, followed immediately by a clap of thunder that made a C4 detonation sound like a mouse whisper. After a few choice expletives and making sure our extremities were still attached, it dawned on us what had happened.

A bolt of lightning had struck the tree next to our tent and arced to the HMMWV antenna, which was still up, and fried the radio. The current then followed the speaker cord into the tent. And guess who was standing in the doorway of the tent, right on top of the speaker cord, watching the storm? That's right, this guy.

I was just six feet from the HMMWV, which is not an ideal distance to be from a lightning strike. Take my word on this one. In addition to the white-hot heat that emanated from the strike and my ringing ears from the thunder clap, I was also lucky enough to feel the current travel up from my feet and out my shoulder, dissipating to the metal crossbeam over the door. My fellow NCO fared about the same.

As the electrical current traveled up to the speaker box, it energized the metal-banded folding table he happened to have his knee propped against. He ended up with an entry burn on his knee and an exit burn on the back of his opposite shoulder as it traveled to the aluminum camp chair on which he was sitting. I am fairly certain

that at that point I knew exactly what a Hot Pocket feels like in a microwave. I had a very metallic taste in my mouth as every particle in my body was ionized.

After that shocking experience, we quit worrying about the rain and high-tailed it back to the barracks. We were then sent to the medic, where we spent the rest of the afternoon hooked up to an EKG and other medical devices. I consider both of us lucky that we walked away with only minor burns. It could have been much worse.

Hindsight being what it is, if we had to be in the field, the best place would not have been under the lone tall tree on the top of a hill in the middle of an open field. Your teachers were right when they told you that in elementary school. It was also a bad idea to stay in a tent and leave the radio on with the antenna up. Our best option would have been to seek shelter inside the HEMMTT. Had we not had that, we could have crouched in a low area (regardless of the rain) out of standing water. Ultimately, though, we should have egressed back to the barracks prior to the storm arriving.

If you don't have an accurate weather forecast or radar in the field, you can always follow the 30-30 Rule. If, from when you see a lightning strike, you are unable to count to 30 before hearing thunder, it's too close and you need to seek refuge somewhere

safe. Once the last lightning strike is seen, wait 30 minutes before resuming your training. That guidance may not be perfect, but it could save your life. ■



Ringling in the New Year Safely

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 3 MARVIN DE OCAMPO
Headquarters and Headquarters Company
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Camp Carroll, Korea

Every year, people around the world gather to celebrate New Year's Eve. Many of these celebrations include large crowds, concerts and extravagant fireworks displays. In the Philippines, we have a number of New Year's traditions such as wearing polka-dotted clothing, serving round fruits and placing coins on every window and door. Round items are believed to bring prosperity in the coming year. Of course, fireworks are also a big part of our tradition.

I remember celebrating New Year's as a child with my aunts, uncles and cousins on my father's side. There was always an enormous amount of food for everyone to gorge themselves on until the next morning. In addition, we followed the old Filipino tradition of celebrating



New Year's with firecrackers. Chinese immigrants brought firecrackers to the Philippines, as well as the belief that the noise from the explosions drives away evil spirits. That tradition continues today.

Filipinos start lighting firecrackers a few hours before the 10 p.m. mass. At 11 p.m., mass ends and even more people head out to shoot off their firecrackers. Ten minutes before

midnight, family members and friends will gather outside of their homes to welcome the New Year. Every child eagerly awaits the New Year, remembering to jump several times at midnight — a tradition believed to make people grow taller. Still, the fireworks are the major draw.

Unfortunately, behind these traditions is the danger of using fireworks. Hospitals in the Philippines routinely begin seeing fireworks-related injuries around Christmas. Last year, the Philippine Department of Health reported 929 cases of fireworks-related injuries. The severity of those injuries ranged from second-degree burns to the loss of fingers or entire hands. Many times these more severe injuries result from the use of illegal fireworks that contain a significant amount of propellant.

Various Philippine government agencies work hard to arrest

FYI

Before spending a small fortune on fireworks this New Year's, ensure they are legal to possess and use in your city and state. The National Council on Fireworks Safety's website is a good source of information on state fireworks laws. You should also always ask your

local fire or police department if fireworks are legal in your area. Although fireworks may be legal in your state, there may be reasons, such as a burn ban due to dry weather, why their use is prohibited in some areas. For more information, visit www.fireworkssafety.org.



Did You Know?

Current requirements for large public or commercial fireworks displays can be found in Department of the Army Pamphlet 385-62 (paragraph 2-13) and National Fire Protection Agency Document 1123, Code for Fireworks Displays. For personal use of fireworks, some generally accepted safety rules include:

- Read and follow the instructions on how to use the item.
- Keep a bucket of water or a garden hose handy in case of fires.
- Maintain adult supervision.
- Have a designated shooter.
- Do not drink while initiating fireworks.
- Use eye protection when shooting fireworks and do not let any part of your body cover the fireworks.
- Fireworks should only be used outdoors.
- Never throw or point fireworks at another person.
- Do not handle or try and relight duds. Wait 20-30 minutes, soak the duds in water and then properly dispose of them.

and punish those who sell illegal fireworks. However, it's difficult to find every offender. In an effort to make New Year's celebrations safer, some municipalities have banned the use of fireworks within the city limits. In addition, the Department of Health began promoting the use of alternative noise-making devices, such as musical instruments, to drive off the evil spirits.

I've noticed many places in the United States sell fireworks year-round. Fortunately, most reputable dealers only carry fireworks that follow strict manufacturing guidelines. Nevertheless, that doesn't guarantee patrons will follow the instructions for safe use. For example, some people enjoy lighting firecrackers or cherry bombs and holding them in their hand as long as possible before throwing them — sometimes at each other!

Even sparklers, which many consider a safe firework, can be dangerous. Sparklers can burn up to 1,800 F, and the stick remains hot long after the flame goes out. Still, some parents will hand their child a sparkler without a second thought. They just don't seem to understand what can happen with these unsafe practices.

This New Year's Eve, make sure to bring some common-sense to your celebration.

Fireworks may be a tradition, but they are also dangerous — especially in the hands of the careless or inexperienced. Rather than taking a chance on a permanent disability injury, just leave the colorful explosions to the experts and attend a professional public fireworks display. After all, isn't it more important to ring in the New Year celebrating with friends and loved ones instead of sitting in an emergency room? ■



Slippery Self Confidence

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 4 QUINCY T. BLUNT
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Fort Hood, Texas

I've been driving since I was 16 years old. I'd like to think I'm an average driver with a safe driving record — barring the occasional speeding violation. The Army has provided me with very comprehensive driver training to make me aware of the hazards on the road. It took one of those lessons being reinforced the hard way for me realize how important that training really is.

I was a young, overconfident and slightly arrogant warrant officer at the time, assigned to the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum, New York. Having grown up in the southwest, I was unfamiliar with winter driving, which can be an extremely harsh, eye-opening experience. As would be expected given the region, winter driving dominated our safety discussions. Multiple driving awareness classes and training sessions were conducted to educate Soldiers such as myself on how to deal with the winter elements.

Like many others, I had an "it-won't-happen-to-me" mentality. My car was reliable and I was so confident in my skills that I assumed only an idiot would get into trouble driving in winter conditions. I'd taken some advice and winterized my car, at least as far as I thought it needed to be. Unfortunately, I wasn't quite prepared for what was about to happen.



One weekend I made an impulsive decision to travel 70 miles south to Syracuse. We'd had some heavy snowfalls during the previous days and I took that into consideration. This particular day the weather was slightly clearer and warmer as I took off during the early afternoon for the hour-long drive. While there, I neglected to keep myself updated on the evening weather forecast. As the evening approached, the temperatures dropped significantly, creating icy conditions on the roads.

I was only about 10 minutes into my return trip to Fort Drum when it began to snow. I hadn't taken into account the unpredictability of the lake effect snowfall drivers often experience on Interstate 81 between Syracuse and Watertown. Recognizing the situation, I used some common sense and reverted

to my driver's training, slowing down significantly. Visibility went from moderate to poor as I continued traveling north at 30-35 mph with my hazard lights flashing. At that point, I should have stopped, but I felt confident in my ability to make it home.

I noticed another vehicle ahead of me, but I couldn't determine the distance between us. As I started slowing down, I realized it had stopped in the road. Instinctively, I hit the brakes. Going into a spin, I remembered my winter driving training and turned into the skid. This was the first time I ever actually had to do that, but it indeed assisted in stopping me before I went off the road.

My heart pounded in my throat. After I caught my breath again, I realized I'd spun 180 degrees and was now facing oncoming



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traffic. I could see headlights in front of me and quickly flashed my high beams to alert oncoming motorists. This bought me a little time as I waited for the traffic to pass before turning around to go in the right direction. I then proceeded to the next available exit, pulled off the highway and waited for about 40 minutes for the snow to subside. After that, I got onto the road and made it back safely. As I drove, I saw several drivers who hadn't been as fortunate and slid off the road.

I will never forget that day and the problems I thought would never happen to me. Over the next couple of years, I saw many other drivers experience similar or worse situations. My overconfidence was the key factor that put me at risk that night. It led me to exercise poor judgment by trying to drive through dangerous winter weather. I could've easily waited out the snow in Syracuse or pulled off the road when the snow began. However, I let my overconfidence

blind me to the risks that day.

Sometimes, we rely too much on our opinion of ourselves and our ability to make good decisions rather than viewing things objectively. Overconfidence can be a game changer, and you can't always predict what direction things will go. I learned through this that patience is indeed a virtue. In fact, in regard to safety, being patient might just be the best way to avoid becoming a patient! ■

HERET COMES

Are you ready
to hit the
road?



- Accelerate and decelerate slowly
- Increase your following distance eight to 10 seconds to provide more room to stop
- Know your brakes
- Don't power up hills and don't stop while going uphill unless necessary
- Take a fully charged cellphone, food, water and warm clothing
- Don't go out unless absolutely necessary

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

READY ...OR NOT?



<https://safety.army.mil>



Not a Strong PC?

RETIRED MAJ. GEORGE JOHNSON
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We've all heard it, and most of us have either done it or suggested it. "That pilot in command can't fly with that pilot; he/she doesn't have the experience!" Or, "We'll sign this guy off as a PC. If we don't, it'll ruin his/her career!" These are conversations we shouldn't have to have.

Don't get me wrong. The first time you go out flying as a newly minted pilot in command, your learning curve is steep. In fact, you'll learn more — about yourself, your techniques and how you teach your pilots — in those first few flights than in the 50 before them. The idea that any PC in your unit cannot fly with any Readiness Level 1 PI should be absurd. That is what your unit's training program should be minimally geared toward. Long term, you should be focused on making every pilot you have into a PC. Imagine the flexibility that level of proficiency gives a commander!

When I was a MEDEVAC detachment commander, I sat down with my standardization instructor pilot and laid out my vision for how we should focus our efforts. (Notice I said our efforts, not just his or mine.) Training Circular



3-04.11 states the PC is:

- The unit's first-level trainer.
- Proficient in the aircraft and all aspects of the unit METL.
- Responsible for safe operation of the aircraft, the safety of all occupants, and the conduct of all operational and training aspects of a specific mission.

If there are PCs in your organization that do not meet those criteria, they should not be PCs. If you have pilots you wouldn't trust with your most junior PC, they shouldn't be RL1.

Most commanders are not instructor pilots; therefore, they do not get to fly with personnel before they are signed off RL1. They look to the IPs and SIPs to hold people to the standard and do not bring records to be signed off until they are ready. This is a two-way street between the commander and standards personnel.

How ridiculous does it sound

when people say, "That guy was a PC, Chalk 3, with a high-time PI or another PC in the seat next to him." Does that PC sound like the guy you want to lead the team when it all comes apart and he is suddenly the air mission commander? Or, is that the pilot you report to higher on your readiness report, then have to explain to your boss how you really can't use him as a PC?

In the aviation world, you're either a PC or you're not. Too many decisions have to be made and lives are on the line. Commanders, SIPs, IPs, PCs and PIs all have a responsibility to bring to light anyone who is a danger to themselves or others in the aircraft. Integrity and personal courage play a role in ensuring personnel stay safe and the mission is accomplished. ■

HERE IT COMES

*Born to fly.
Safety for life.*

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The U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center has the tools to keep you and your Soldiers safe, both on and off duty. Visit us online at <https://safety.army.mil>.

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



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