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**THIS MONTH** SEPTEMBER 2015



## The Last Stand

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It was October in south Mississippi, and the weekend was upon us. For some, it was probably no different than any other weekend. For others, however, it signaled the beginning of something we'd looked forward to all summer — hunting season!

Like every other hunter, I couldn't wait for another chance to bag a big buck. To ensure I was prepared, I set out all the gear I'd need for the morning, inspected my climbing stand, put a coat of wax on my bow strings and sharpened my broadheads. I had practiced enough

that I was sure I could hit a target at 30-plus yards. Everything was great, except the weather. The forecast called for severe thunderstorms and heavy rain throughout the night and into early morning. Still, I held out hope the forecast was wrong.

The following morning, my dad and I awoke to find that, sure enough, it was pouring outside. This was both good and bad. Even though I wanted to be in the woods at first light, I knew the deer would start moving right after the rain passed. We decided to wait a few hours for the weather to clear.

As expected, the rain subsided a few hours later and we ventured into the woods. I had the perfect spot picked out along an old fence line with oaks on one side and short pines on the other. I'd seen plenty of deer here in the past and was sure this year wouldn't be any different. I found a pine tree I'd previously used with my stand while my dad headed for a spot about 200 yards away.

I climbed the tree and then hoisted my bow with the rope I had attached to the stand. I sat there for about a half hour without any luck. The only thing I heard was

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## “So there I was about 25 feet above the ground with my legs hanging.”

water droplets falling from the trees and hitting the ground. The woods were saturated, as was the tree I had climbed. I wasn't concerned, though, because I'd climbed wet trees in the past and never had any trouble — that is until this day.

I stood up and must have bumped the bottom piece of my stand. Since the tree was wet, the stand didn't have much traction, so down it went followed by me. Fortunately, I didn't fall far because I had my safety harness attached to the tree. The bottom of my stand

didn't go far either because of the rope I had attached between the two pieces. I was able to pull myself back up to the top piece and sit down. However, as I pulled up the bottom, the rope snapped and the stand fell to the ground.

So there I was about 25 feet above the ground with my legs hanging. At least I was sitting down, but it didn't take long for my legs to fall asleep and go numb. Luckily, my dad wasn't too far away. I contacted him over the two-way radios we'd brought with us and informed him of my

predicament. Within a few minutes he was there and, with his assistance, I was able to get out of the tree safely.

Once on the ground, many questions went through my mind. What if I hadn't secured my safety harness? What if my dad hadn't joined me? What if we hadn't brought those two-way radios? Thankfully, none of these what-ifs happened. Since I had on my safety harness, I was able to hunt the rest of that day and many more since. If not for my safety harness, I would have fallen for sure. That hunting trip taught me a very valuable lesson I will never forget — always put safety first. Be careful out there! ■

## FYI

There are many ways to ensure you stay safe when using a treestand. Here are a few guidelines from the Treestand Manufacturer's Association:

- Always wear a fall-arrest system/full-body harness meeting TMA standards, even during ascent and descent. Be aware that single-strap belts and chest harnesses are no longer recommended and should not be used. Failure to use an FAS could result in serious injury or death.

- Never exceed the weight limit specified by the manufacturer. If you have any questions after reviewing the warnings and instructions, please contact the manufacturer.

- Always read and understand the manufacturer's warnings and instructions before using the treestand each season. Practice with the treestand at ground level prior to using at elevated positions. (Editor's note: Maintain the warnings

and instructions for later review. If you loan your stand to a buddy or decide to sell it, being able to pass along those documents will be both helpful and appreciated.)

- Always inspect the treestand and FAS for signs of wear or damage before each use. Contact the manufacturer for replacement parts. Destroy all products that cannot be repaired by the manufacturer and/or exceed the recommended expiration date (or if the manufacturer no longer exists). The FAS should be discarded and replaced after a fall has occurred.

- Always practice in your full-body harness in the presence of a responsible adult prior to using it in an elevated hunting environment. The goal is to learn what it feels like to hang suspended in it at ground level and how to properly use your suspension relief device.

- Always attach your full-body harness in the manner and method described by the manufacturer.

Failure to do so may result in suspension without the ability to recover into your treestand. Be aware of the hazards associated with full-body harnesses and the fact that prolonged suspension in a harness may be fatal. Have in place a plan for rescue, including the use of cellphones or signal devices that may be easily reached and used while suspended. If rescue personnel cannot be notified, you must have a plan for recovery/escape. If you have to hang suspended for a period of time before help arrives, exercise your legs by pushing against the tree or doing any other form of continuous motion or use your suspension relief device. Failure to recover in a timely manner could result in serious injury or death. If you do not have the physical ability to recover/escape, hunt from the ground.

- Always hunt with a plan and, if possible, a buddy. Before you leave home, let others know your



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exact hunting location, when you plan to return and who is with you.

■ Always carry emergency signal devices such as a cellphone, walkie-talkie, whistle, signal flare, personal locator device and flashlight on your person at all times and within reach, even while you are suspended in your FAS. In the event of an accident, remain calm and seek help immediately.

■ Always watch for changing weather conditions.

■ Always select the proper tree for use with your treestand. Select a live, straight tree that fits within the size limits recommended in your treestand's instructions. Do not climb or place a treestand against a leaning tree. Never leave a treestand installed for more than

two weeks since damage could result from changing weather conditions and/or from other factors not obvious with a visual inspection.

■ Always use a haul line to pull up your gear and unloaded firearm or bow to your treestand once you have reached your desired hunting height. Never climb with anything in your hands or on your back. Prior to descending, lower your equipment on the opposite side of the tree.

■ Always know your physical limitations. Don't take chances. Do not climb when using drugs or alcohol or if you're sick or unrested. If you start thinking about how high you are, don't go any higher.

■ Never use homemade or permanently elevated stands or make modifications to a

purchased treestand without the manufacturer's written permission. Only purchase and use treestands and FASs meeting or exceeding TMA standards. For a detailed list of certified products, contact the TMA office or refer to the TMA website at <http://www.tmastands.com>.

■ Never hurry! While climbing with a treestand, make slow, even movements of no more than 10-12 inches at a time. Make sure you have proper contact with the tree and/or treestand every time you move. On ladder-type treestands, maintain three points of contact with each step.

TAKE THE CHALLENGE,  
LEARN THE LESSON.



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Firearms Safety Techniques, an interactive site, is available for Soldiers, Family members and Civilians to learn about off-duty safe firearms handling. Visit the site for more useful firearms safety resources.

# HERE IT COMES



- Treat every weapon as if it is loaded.
- Handle every weapon with care.
- Identify the target before you fire.
- Never point the muzzle at anything you don't intend to shoot.
- Keep the weapon on safe and your finger off the trigger until you intend to fire.

# 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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## Let's Switch

1ST ARMORED DIVISION  
Fort Bliss, Texas

*Author's note: The following story was written by a Soldier-rider and is true. The events are retold to give insights into the many hazards riders face when they are on the road. The lessons will help us all become more experienced motorcycle riders.*

A few years ago, a friend of mine who is a very experienced rider and has spent a lot of effort practicing motorcycle safety was on a group ride in the Pacific Northwest. At the time, he was riding a new Polaris Can-Am Spyder. He and a buddy, who was on a new Triumph sport bike, decided to switch rides at a fuel stop (his first mistake). Less than five miles later, a truck without brake lights suddenly slowed ahead of group. My friend over-braked on this unfamiliar bike (his second mistake), did two or three stoppies and then a forward flip. His Aerostich riding gear did a great job protecting him, but he did suffer enough damage to both hands to require multiple surgeries and almost a year of recuperation.

Unfortunately for my friend, this accident had a huge impact on his job because he is a writer. It was tough on his wife and children, too, as there were many things he couldn't do for himself while he recovered. He was also forced to cancel a long-planned summer vacation with his son so he could have one of his several surgeries. He never imagined all of this could be the result of just switching rides.



In the months following the accident, my friend spent a lot of time thinking about his risk matrix. He commented at one point that, "There is no such thing as absolute safety, but I definitely need to hone my risk-reduction skills and tactics. Crashing just soaks up too much money, time and my wife's energy." This was from a guy who has ridden far more miles than 99 percent of us ever will and devoted innumerable hours thinking about how to do it as safely as possible. From this accident, he learned to never change motorcycles in the middle of a ride.

I tell this story to remind us

all to review our own risk matrix every time we mount a bike. This matrix should reflect the lessons we have garnered from our training, experience and any pertinent writings we've absorbed. We should also think about the mistakes we've commonly made. Not looking far enough ahead is my most common mistake.

What errors do you make while riding? Have you come up with any solutions to correct them? If not, I urge you to do so as soon as possible. Remember, reviewing your risk matrix can go a long way toward reducing the odds of an accident and its consequences. Ride safe! ■

**"He was also forced to cancel a long-planned summer vacation with his son so he could have one of his several surgeries. He never imagined all of this could be the result of just switching rides."**



## Indiscipline in the Air

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**T**hursday, Aug. 23, 2001, marked four months since I had departed active duty to pursue a career as an airline pilot. I'd been an Army aviator for 12 years, all rotary-wing time. That summer, I'd enrolled in an airline career pilot training program with a nationally recognized flight school and had earned my fixed-wing, multi-engine, instrument and commercial ratings. I was in the process of preparing for my multi-engine flight instructor rating check ride, which was scheduled for the following week.

That morning, I flew a Piper Seminole from Jacksonville, Florida, to Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport (KFLA) to drop off two student pilots from our school who had check rides scheduled there that afternoon. My co-pilot, Chris, was another student at the school who was also in the airline career program. While our colleagues flew their check rides, Chris and I found some friends in the coffee shop at the FBO and joined them for lunch.

We were introduced to another pilot, Luis, who had a job as pilot for a private airplane owner flying a Piper Seneca under Part 91 rules.



He informed us this was his last day because he was beginning a new job as a Part 135 Cessna 402/404 charter pilot with Blackhawk International Airways. As we finished lunch, Luis said he had the use of his boss' Seneca for one last day and asked if we wanted to join him on a final flight up the south Florida coastline. Chris and I agreed to go and the three of us walked directly out on the ramp and over to the Seneca. I asked Luis if he needed to file a flight plan or check weather. He just smiled, pointed to the sunny skies and asked, "Why?"

Luis unlocked the plane and we boarded, with Chris in the right seat and me in the back seat. I expected to see Luis do a preflight check, but

he simply got in the plane without even a walk-around. I asked him about a preflight and he told me he'd already flown the plane that morning. Without using a checklist, Luis started the engines and called ground for taxi. We received a taxi clearance for runway 9R. As we taxied toward the runway, Chris asked Luis if he wanted him to read the checklist. Luis replied, "No thanks, bro. I've got it memorized." He did some cursory procedures, which I presumed to be taxi and before-takeoff checks, as we taxied.

Upon reaching the runway, tower issued us a clearance to take off on Runway 9R, maintain a heading of 090 and remain below 500 feet on initial climb out. At KFLA, there are two parallel runways, 9L and 9R. Runway 9L is on the north and is the larger of the two, accommodating the big commercial aircraft. When we took off, Luis continued to climb through 500 feet AGL and turned 90 degrees to the left, following the beach to

**"It also found Luis had falsified his logbooks to get the charter job and had traces of alcohol and cocaine in his blood."**



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the north. He also turned into the path of departing traffic from 9L.

As we climbed through 1,000 feet, the tower immediately transmitted, "Seneca, I cleared you for heading 090 and 500 feet! Descend now! Maintain 360 heading!" The tower controller was female, and Luis replied, "I am descending. Don't get your panties in a bunch."

I was astonished when tower did not reply with instructions to call an FAA phone number upon landing. Instead, she gave a frequency for Miami approach for flight following. Luis read back the frequency, but did not check in.

At that point, we were flying parallel to the beach, about 100 yards out from the shoreline. Luis initiated a descent, but did not level off at 500 feet altitude. We continued to descend all the way down to 100 feet AGL, basically buzzing the beach at Fort Lauderdale. By this time, I had seen enough and just wanted to get out of the plane alive and not under investigation. I told Luis he was in violation of Part 91, minimum safe altitude of 500 feet over water, and told him to climb. He smiled and said, "I thought you wanted a ride."

I replied I was an Army Black Hawk pilot and familiar with low-level flight performed correctly. I told him to turn around, climb and take us back to KFL. Luis executed a low-level 55-degree bank turn back to the south and climbed to 500 feet altitude. He contacted tower and was cleared to return to the airport and land on Runway 9R.

As we taxied back to the ramp, I scanned the vicinity for FAA sedans or a police car. We parked and I told Luis it had been a hair-

raising experience. Chris and I then walked away from the plane as fast as we could. I remember turning to Chris and saying, "Luis is going to kill somebody one day."

Two days later, on Saturday, Aug. 25, 2001, R&B singer Aaliyah, her entourage of seven and all of their equipment loaded onto a Cessna 402 in the Bahamas. Immediately after takeoff, the plane crashed into a marsh adjacent the runway. There were no survivors. Luis was the pilot.

The National Transportation Safety Board investigation determined the aircraft was mechanically sound at the time of the accident, but was "substantially overloaded and well outside weight and balance limits." It also found Luis had falsified his logbooks to get the charter job and had traces of alcohol and cocaine in his blood.

Luis was the most extreme example of indiscipline in aviation I have ever encountered. The consequences of his indiscipline were predictable and tragic. When I confronted him on his indiscipline that day, I was concerned for my own hide. Whether I could have prevented the accident that happened two days later, I'll never know. In hindsight, I should have called the FSDO that afternoon and reported him as a reckless pilot. As a professional aviator, that was my duty.

Eighteen months later, I was an instructor at the same flight school in Jacksonville. I heard rumors that one of my colleagues had a habit of performing aileron rolls, a prohibited aerobatic maneuver, with his students in the Seminole. I approached one of his students and



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she confirmed it was true. I was on the phone with our chief pilot in less than five minutes. My colleague was fired and the FAA was notified. A few of my other colleagues were furious with me and accused me of being a snitch. I never gave it a second thought. I wasn't about to have another crash on my conscience.

Our passengers trust us and put their lives in our hands every time they get on our aircraft. Safety is a duty that goes beyond just our own conduct. Every aviator has a duty to intervene and interrupt the accident chain. We owe it to our profession and to the passengers who put their faith in us. ■



## 'Most' is not enough

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**G**rowing up in the South, I operated tractors on a regular basis. I always thought the seat belt and rollover protective structure were so stupid. Why would you need all that safety stuff on a tractor that's only traveling a few miles per hour? After hearing the details of an unfortunate tractor mishap, I quickly changed my tune.

A teenager in a town where I'd once lived was using a rotary cutter to clip the grass in a field. He was apparently driving too fast when he ran over a stump, which caused the tractor to bounce. The teen was thrown to the ground and the clipper ran over him, severing his legs and causing him to bleed to death. Had he been wearing a seat belt, he'd still be alive today. This accident really hit home and convinced me I'd been wrong about the importance of my tractor's safety equipment.

Fast forward to a few years later when I was doing prep work for the upcoming deer hunting season. We had recently purchased some land neighboring our property and I was using my tractor to enlarge an already-established field edged with bamboo and tall grass that bordered a large creek on one side. I was wearing my seat belt and had the roll bar up and locked into place, but I started the task without first conducting a recon of the area. That mistake was almost my last.

After several passes by the creek, I decided to make one more run to put the finishing touches on my work. Because I hadn't reconned the area, I wasn't aware of a washed



out spot that extended into the field. My left-front tire fell into the washout and the tractor nearly overturned. Had it, I would have likely ended up in the creek.

Fortunately, I'd been riding slowly enough that I was able to stop the tractor before it went any farther into the washout. I then used the front-end loader in conjunction with the four-wheel drive to work my way out of the situation. Afterward, I was able to finish my work without injury to myself or damage to the tractor.

While I thought I was doing everything right that day by wearing my seat belt and using a roll bar, my failure to conduct a proper route recon before I started working could have easily cost me my life.

As Soldiers, we're expected to incorporate safety into everything we do. In case you haven't realized, there is a reason we wear eye and ear protection, use ground guides, conduct rollover training, wear seat belts and perform route recons. It helps keep us safe! We must learn that these safety measures apply to our off-duty activities as well.

Remember, there are no shortcuts in safety. What if I had conducted a recon of the area but didn't wear my safety glasses? While I would have avoided the wash out, I could have lost an eye had I taken a tree branch to the face. Doing most is not enough. We must be thorough and perform all the necessary safety steps to prevent an accident. ■

### FYI

In an effort to reduce injuries and fatalities, the Kubota Tractor Corporation offers the following 10 Commandments of Tractor Safety:

**1.** Know your tractor, its implements and how

they work. Please read and understand the operator's manual(s) before operating the equipment. Also, keep your equipment in good condition.

**2.** Use ROPS (rollover protection structure) and a seat belt whenever and wherever applicable. If your



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tractor has a foldable ROPS, fold it down only when absolutely necessary and fold it up and lock it again as soon as possible. Do not wear the seat belt when the ROPS is folded. Most tractor fatalities are caused by overturns.

**3.** Be familiar with your terrain and work area. Walk the area first to identify any debris or obstacles that could hinder your ability to drive safely. Use special caution on slopes, slow down for all turns and stay off the highway whenever possible.

**4.** Never start an engine in a closed shed or garage. Exhaust gas contains carbon monoxide, which is colorless, odorless and deadly.

**5.** Always keep your PTO (power

take-off) properly shielded. Make it a habit to walk around your tractor and PTO-driven implement, never over, through or between the tractor and implement, particularly if either is running. The PTO rotates with enough speed and strength to kill you.

**6.** Keep your hitches low and always on the drawbar. Otherwise, your tractor might flip over backward.

**7.** Never get off a moving tractor or leave it with its engine running. Shut it down before leaving the seat. A runaway tractor can be extremely dangerous.

**8.** Never refuel while the engine is running or hot. Additionally, do not add coolant to the radiator

while the engine is hot. Hot coolant can erupt and scald.

**9.** Keep all children off and away from your tractor and its implements at all times. Children are generally attracted to tractors and the work they do. However, a tractor's work is not child's play. Remember, a child's disappointment is fleeting, while your memory of his or her injury or death resulting from riding the tractor with you, or being too close, will last a lifetime.

**10.** Never be in a hurry or take chances about anything you do with your tractor. Think safety first, then take your time and do it right.

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# HERE IT COMES

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to hit the  
road?

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- Plan your route
- Pack an emergency road kit
- Check the weather forecast
- Get plenty of rest
- Complete a TRiPS assessment

# READY ...OR NOT?

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



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## Mr. Extra-Cautious

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**A**s many parents can relate, having multiple children and the sibling rivalries that go with it can be distracting at times — especially when you're driving. I pride myself on being very careful when behind the wheel of any vehicle and always ensure every passenger's seat belt is properly buckled. So, as you can imagine, I was completely beside myself when I, of all people, "Mr. Cautious," not only got into an accident, but did it with my three young children in the back seat.

There I was, driving down the highway and trying to find a restaurant. It was 11 a.m. and I had just left the fitness center where my children attended swimming lessons. They had worked very hard at their lessons that morning so, of course, they were tired and hungry. Some of you know all too well how that combination results in three very irritable



children. Before I took them home for their afternoon nap, I wanted to grab them something quick to eat. I had just spotted a restaurant I thought they'd like when they started yelling at each other, kicking the back of the seats and hollering things like, "Dad, John touched me!"

Between the busy morning, the

kids acting up and the heavy traffic flow, you can imagine not only how shot my nerves were at this point, but, more importantly, how distracted I was from the road. We were traveling about 30 mph and traffic was flowing steadily when I turned my head for a split second to tell the kids to cut it out. When I turned my attention back to the road, however, I was shocked to see traffic had come to a stop.

I tried slowing down as much as possible, but immediately realized I wasn't going to be able to stop, so I pulled into the turning lane to the right in an attempt to avoid rear-ending the vehicle ahead. Unfortunately, I didn't quite make it, and the front-left corner of my vehicle struck the other vehicle's right-rear bumper, causing my seat belt to tighten when I jerked forward.

**"This was the first accident my children had ever been in, so they were terrified. I followed the other driver to the nearest safe location and immediately exited the vehicle to check each of my children for injuries."**



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This was the first accident my children had ever been in, so they were terrified. I followed the other driver to the nearest safe location and immediately exited the vehicle to check each of my children for injuries. Satisfied that they were all OK, I then went to the other driver to ensure he hadn't suffered any injuries.

I called the local police department and asked that they send out an officer so we could file a formal report. As I was giving the officer my statement and insurance information, local paramedics arrived on the scene and double-checked everyone for injuries. Fortunately, the accident had only given us a scare and no one was hurt.

Before leaving the scene, the police officer had a talk with my kids about the importance of not distracting their mother or father while they're driving. He then pulled me aside to talk about my decision-making once I had realized traffic had stopped. He told me had I not reacted in the manner I did, the accident could have been much worse. He informed me that not only would there have been extensive damage to both vehicles, but all of us would have likely sustained injuries. He left me with a pat on the shoulder and a friendly reminder to drive safely.

There is only one thing that could have prevented this accident. Regardless of the police officer's opinion about my decisions throughout the course of the accident, the fact of the matter is I should have never taken my eyes off the road. There will always be distractions on the road, but taking your eyes off it for even a split second could result in an accident. I learned this the hard way. Just because we avoided injury this time doesn't mean we'll be so lucky in the future. Therefore, Mr. Cautious has now turned into Mr. Extra-Cautious. ■

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## Bucket List COMPILED BY THE KNOWLEDGE STAFF

**N**ot long after I completed readiness level progression at my National Guard unit I received a call to join another Black Hawk crew on a state active-duty mission fighting fires near the Canadian border. My experience with the Bambi Bucket consisted of maybe a half-dozen dips and drops during my initial qualification, so I was relieved to hear I would be flying with a maintenance test pilot who was one of our most experienced senior warrant officers.

The long flight to the fire was largely uneventful. We met our sister aircraft at the civilian staging airfield to get briefed by the ground firefighters and aerial controller before setting up the buckets and starting the operation. The winds were exceptionally strong that day on the Northern Plains, making the grass fire spread too quickly for ground crews to contain. Before we had arrived, a civilian contract helicopter had been working the fire, but the pilot decided to park it after determining the wind gusts were too strong for his light aircraft. Still well within our aircraft limits, we decided to work the fire until either the winds picked up, we ran out of daylight or we reached our duty-day limits.

Under the direction of the aerial controller who was circling overhead in an airplane, we were directed to several bodies of water surrounding the fire and selected a downwind dip site that was clear of smoke. It was at this point,

as the crew began discussing how cool what we were about to do really was, we discovered the only person in the aircraft to have previously worked an actual fire was one of the crew chiefs.

As a newly minted pilot, I had not considered complacency to be something I needed to worry about until years later in my career.



In that moment, however, I quickly realized my trust in the experience of my PC had let me take the attitude of just being along for the ride. With the exception of our first pass on the fire, where our flight path was a bit too low and brought us through thick smoke, the first day was a success. We honed our approach angles, dipping sites and dropping techniques, leading to a positive debrief with the firefighters that evening.

The next morning was similarly windy and brought more of the

same. With the fire so close to good dipping sites, we were able to go from dip to drop in the matter of minutes. After several bags of gas and miles of grass fire extinguished, the second day was coming to a close. Our sister ship had just returned to the staging airfield for the night, and we were being directed by the aerial controller to

mop up hotspots which had flared up in the already-extinguished area.

For most of the afternoon, we had been using a great dip site downwind of the fire. It was deep, had great references for a solid hover and was free of trees, letting us stay above effective translational lift throughout the dip. That day, we had made about 80 dips at this site, always departing with a full bucket in the direction of the wind and returning light with the wind to our backs. All day we had tightened up our downwind-to-



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## “ But something felt different this time. It felt like the bottom began to drop out and we started sinking — fast!”

base and base-to-final turns due to the 30-plus-knot winds pushing our patterns farther from the dip site. Tightening our turns made our patterns more efficient, and due to light aircraft going into the dip and strong headwinds on final, our approaches were safe and stable.

All of this changed when our aerial controller asked us to hit a hotspot on the downwind side of our dip site. This drop was on our way back to the stage airfield and would be our last of the day. As we took off out of the dip site, everything was normal. We departed into the wind and proceeded to make our crosswind and downwind turns after we had gained airspeed. What happened next took the whole crew by surprise, yet it should not have.

As we passed the hotspot out our left door, we began slowing down to make the base turn as we had done countless times into the dip site. But something felt different this time. It felt like the bottom began to drop out and we started sinking — fast! We had not taken into account that we now had a full bucket of water hanging below us. Due to the sustained winds and our dip/drop locations, this was the first time all day we were at an out-of-ground-effect hover with a full bucket of water.

As we pulled in power to arrest our descent, it became clear we did not have enough power margin to overcome the rate of descent before hitting the ground. As I reached for the hook release button, I heard our seasoned crew chief say these precious words seconds before impact, “Dumping, dumping, dumping.” Immediately, our crisis was over. We credit that crew chief with saving our bacon that day. If I had released the water bucket, not only would it have been stuck in a muddy marsh miles from the nearest city, it likely would have been destroyed from the impact.

The list of factors that led to our adventure that day is long

and distinguished, but all of them were avoidable. During the mission brief, crew mix could have considered more than pairing a low-hour pilot with a high-hour pilot; recency of experience and expertise on the specific mission task is vitally important as well. Including a candid discussion of inexperience at this task in the crew brief could have heightened crew coordination and pointed out specific things to note such as the wind conditions in relation to OGE hover and the necessity to rely on the airspeed indicator instead of visual cues to determine when we would transition through ETL. On the problematic downwind to base leg that day, we went through ETL at about 50 knots groundspeed. We learned a lot about crew mix that day, along with proficiency with the task at hand and how aviation always has a few surprises to share with you. ■

## ARE YOU READY?

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

**ARAP**  
ARMY READINESS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

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

Help your organization reduce accidental loss and maintain your organization's work force/combat power.

- Assess safety culture and climate
- A leading indicator to identify losses or mishaps
- Proactive leaders receive the best results
- Method to direct resources
- Provides immediate feedback

Get the tools before  
the road gets rough.



# Driver's Training Toolbox

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





## The Third Law STAFF SGT. SHANE MILLER Clarksville, Tennessee

**S**oldiers determined to improve their physical conditioning while pushing the limits and having fun took to the woods of Tennessee on mountain bikes. All preventive maintenance checks, pre-combat checks and test rides were completed on man and machine. All were in full working order.

The Soldiers were shielded from the environment by all the personal protective equipment they could possibly need, to include helmets, gloves, eye protection, padded shorts, and quick-release shoes and pedals to allow them to safely egress their bicycles should the need arise. They were also equipped with CamelBaks, first-aid kits and bicycle repair tools and parts. One Soldier was even wearing a reflective PT belt.

At first, the ride was routine, fast, fun and challenging. Both individuals had their heads on a



realized his buddy was bleeding.

"You all right?" he asked as his exhausted friend rolled to a stop next to him.

"Tired, fat and out of shape, but all in all I'm good," he said while gasping for breath and drinking water.

"Looks like something got you. Your shirt's torn and you're

should take point for a while. Though he was not as fit as the faster rider, the Soldier had more experience and pushed the bike and himself to the limits at almost every opportunity. At one point, while negotiating a turn in the middle of a hill, he attempted to ride through an obstacle balanced only his back wheel. Not surprisingly, this resulted in a crash. He laughed it off while his buddy warned, "Maybe you shouldn't push it too hard. We still have to work tomorrow."

"Nah, man, I got this — just slipped out on the loose dirt," he claimed while getting back on his feet and knocking off the dust.

"OK, but if you get hurt being stupid, I'm just gonna laugh and leave you here to figure out where you went wrong!" his buddy said.

"Roger that. I'd expect nothing less," he replied.

After a few sips of water, the men were back on the trail, flying down hills, powering through climbs, careening the turns and having a blast. As they approached an

**"Rolling over, he took off his helmet and noticed several large gashes on it. Without it, those gashes could have been on his head."**

swivel because the area was usually teeming with deer, hikers, joggers and fellow cyclists. The lead rider was more familiar with the trail and in better condition, often getting away from his buddy and having to wait at the next turn for him to catch up. At one stop, the Soldier

bleeding," the lead cyclist said.

"Eh, cut it a little close to a low-hanging branch on the last turn. It's just a scratch," the other cyclist reported back.

After the brief exchange, the Soldiers decided the slower of the two



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extremely tight and winding part of the trail, the faster rider took off, knowing he would be able to stay within sight and earshot of the slower rider. The slower rider pushed himself to perform better — going faster into turns, leaning the bike over further and staying away from his brakes at all cost. The whole time he was thinking, “I may not be able to pedal as fast, but I can keep up or even pass this guy with better technique and bike-handling skills.”

After a sharp left turn, the trail straightened out and the lead rider came back into view of his slower buddy. The only thing separating them now was about 25 meters and a small wooden bridge. The slower rider wrenched down on his pedals, launching his bike forward while

picking up speed and closing on his buddy. As he approached the bridge, the Soldier decided to push the limits yet again. Shifting his weight, he lifted the rear wheel off the ground to roll over the bridge on only his front tire. The Soldier’s aggressiveness sent him flipping over the handlebars and into some exposed tree roots.

“I’m down,” is all he was able to force out through the pain. Rolling over, he took off his helmet and noticed several large gashes on it. Without it, those gashes could have been on his head. As he made his way back to his feet, his buddy pulled up and asked, “Are you OK?”

The faster rider was shocked his buddy was even standing. His helmet had been torn up, his shirt shredded and covered in blood, and

both hands were bleeding profusely. Adding insult to injury, his bicycle was lodged upside down in a tree, several feet above the trail. They recovered the bicycle and began to make their way down the trail again.

“What happened back there?” the Soldier asked his injured buddy.

“Well,” the injured rider said, “I felt like practicing some physics while pushing the limits. Turns out Newton was right.”

“Newton?” the Soldier questioned.

“Yes, sir,” the injured rider replied. “Newton’s third law of motion. For every action, there is an equal but opposite reaction. This time, my overconfidence led to an equal amount of pain, skin and blood loss — not to mention injury to pride.” ■

## FYI

### Mountain Biking Safety Tips

There are numerous ways you can improve your mountain bike safety. Many riders will tell you that wearing a helmet is the most important step to staying safe. The second most important step is you should always ride in control of your mountain bike. By riding in control, you’ll not only prevent crashes, but keep others on the trail safe as well. When riding out of control,

you lose the ability to adjust to the terrain as you ride over it. This can — and usually does — result in serious injury to yourself and others.

Follow these helpful guidelines and you’ll remain safe when riding your mountain bike.

**1. Gear.** Always make sure you wear a helmet and other necessary safety gear for the conditions that you plan to ride in.

**2. Never ride beyond your control.** There is no shame in walking the areas of the trail where you don’t feel comfortable

riding; never let anyone else tell you there is.

**3. Keep your speed under control.** Always make sure you keep your speed at a level where you can quickly adjust to any obstacles or changes in the trail.

**4. Know your trail.** You should never push the limits on trails you aren’t familiar with. Take trails you aren’t familiar with at slow speeds until you learn them better.

**5. Slow down around blind corners.** If you can’t see past a corner, slow down. You never

know who or what you could run into.

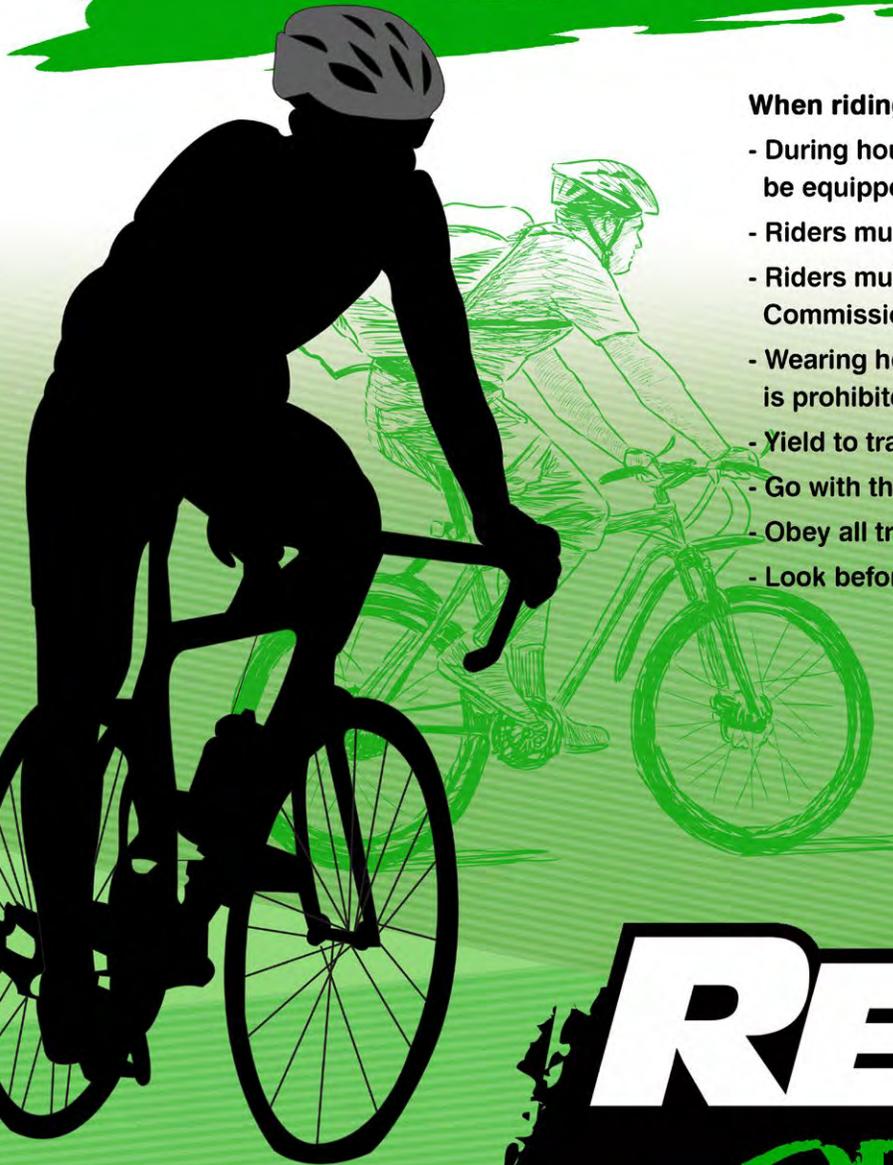
**6. Start small then go big.** Work your way up to stunts or obstacles. Practice in controlled environment and work your way up to doing the more dangerous stunts.

**7. Play it smart.** If you start to question what you’re doing, you probably shouldn’t be doing it. Always think about what you are doing and go with your instincts.

*Editor’s note: Adapted from an article by Jerry Travers in [adultbicycling.com](http://adultbicycling.com).*

# HERE IT COMES

are you ready for the ride?



## When riding on an Army installation:

- During hours of darkness or reduced visibility, bicycles must be equipped with an operable headlight or taillight.
- Riders must wear a reflective upper garment.
- Riders must wear a Consumer Product Safety Commission-approved helmet.
- Wearing headphones, earphones or other listening devices is prohibited.
- Yield to traffic when appropriate.
- Go with the traffic flow.
- Obey all traffic laws.
- Look before turning.



# 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?



ARMY STRONG:



<https://safety.army.mil>



## Too Big, Too Fast, Too Soon COMPILED BY THE KNOWLEDGE STAFF



I was stationed near Stuttgart, Germany, when I bought my first real motorcycle — a Kawasaki GT 750 — in 1986. Back then, if you had a motorcycle endorsement on your stateside driver's license, they just added it to your U.S. Army, Europe, license. There was no special training or safety courses required. I had an endorsement from my home state of Illinois. However, I "forgot" to mention I was limited to 150cc or smaller engines. Why bother the folks in USAREUR with such a minor detail?

My Kawasaki was a big street bike with shaft drive, air suspension, electronic gauges and a mean-sounding exhaust. I quickly learned it was much faster than the 125cc Yamaha I'd previously owned. I could do 0-80 mph in a block, a big change from a top speed of 60 mph.

One of my friends had a Suzuki 650 Katana, and I was sure I could keep up with him because I had a bigger bike. We decided to ride at Solitude, a curvy road that ran through the hills to a castle. I'd

like to say I got to see the castle, but I didn't because about five minutes into the ride I discovered I didn't know how to corner.

My more experienced friend could corner like famed racer John Surtees, hanging off the bike at speed. I didn't want to be left behind when he accelerated to pass a car, so I tried passing while entering a right-left "S" blind curve. I was going 85 mph when I cleared the car. As

**"I was going 85 mph when I cleared the car. As I did, I saw a car in the oncoming lane and quickly swerved right to avoid it. "**

I did, I saw a car in the oncoming lane and quickly swerved right to avoid it. Just then the road curved left, and I was shocked when I realized I couldn't lean far enough left to make the turn. I froze. I felt I couldn't move the bike. I didn't

know how to countersteer in a turn.

I ran off the road and into a ditch. I tried to keep the bike balanced and slow down on the grass, but it shook violently and I went over the handlebars onto an embankment. I landed on my hands and rolled forward, trying to control my fall. I then slid feet first for a short distance on my butt before my heels caught and I started flipping. Every time I hit the ground, it felt as if I stopped for a split second and then flipped again. Finally, I went up into the air and landed hard on my back. At last I'd stopped. I was wondering where the bike was when I felt the license plate tap my left boot. The bike had tumbled to the bottom of the embankment and stopped just short of my leg.

I was numb all over, but I wasn't scared because everything had happened so quickly. I moved my fingers, toes and head and realized my back wasn't broken. I then sat up and realized I couldn't breathe. I stood up to check the bike and

became dizzy. The driver of the car I'd passed ran up and grabbed my arm and told me to sit. As best as I could understand his German, he chided me for riding too fast, and then told me I was lucky to be alive. I tried to agree, but I



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couldn't get enough wind to talk.

A German doctor who spoke English stopped and checked me. He explained my breathing problems could be due to a cracked rib and I should have X-rays taken. My friend then came back. He'd been waiting for me and wondering where I'd been.

For about a half-hour I could barely breathe. Eventually, I was able to take deeper breaths, but it was very painful. For about a month afterward, my lower back would spasm painfully every time I moved. I couldn't apply backward pressure to my wrists or thrust my arms out without pain, let alone do my job or pushups.

We had a field training exercise the following weekend, so I just got some Tylenol and sucked it up.

God must have saved me because I don't know why the bike didn't crush me during the accident. Solitude has a lot of trees, but, fortunately, there weren't any where I crashed. I paid about 250 Deutsche marks to the towing service and, about a month later, was charged 450 DM by the polizei for the ambulance ride. I was also given a ticket and a few points for my license. But at least I was alive.

Afterward, I spoke to other bikers and learned how to countersteer and corner better. I didn't let the accident

scare me away from riding. However, from then on I rode with a great deal more respect for my machine.

This accident was my fault. I was driving too fast for my level of experience and traffic conditions. I was passing on a blind curve — a very dangerous thing — and thought I knew how to ride when, in reality, I didn't. I assumed a bike's quicker acceleration compared to a car meant I could corner at higher speeds. I rode too big a bike too fast and too soon and almost died proving myself wrong. ■

**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 U.S Army Combat Readiness Center MMP website for some examples of active mentoring programs.

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



## Extra Help COMPILED BY THE KNOWLEDGE STAFF

**S**everal years ago, my unit was deployed to Guatemala to aid in hurricane relief efforts. We deployed with a mix of UH-60A and UH-60L aircraft, all fitted with extended range fuel system tanks because of the lack of refuel locations around the country.

Our unit was a mixed bag of aviators from two companies. We were all going to be operating

up the valleys to assist the trapped locals. Caban was at about 6,500 feet mean sea level elevation and the temperatures were about 28-30 C. I was an overconfident junior W-2 unit trainer flying with a senior W-2 who had never been a pilot in command and with whom I had never flown.

At Caban, we discussed our loads, which were purposely 1,000 pounds lighter than our maximum

up the aircraft and prepared for departure. We came to a 10-foot hover and verified our performance planning. It matched what was planned and the weight onboard, so we made our call to trail and my co-pilot began his in-ground-effect acceleration.

As the aircraft accelerated, it dipped slightly and the nose came up just a little, which is normal and easily fixed with a slight application of forward cyclic. However, my co-pilot didn't apply any more cyclic and, before I realized what was happening, we went from IGE to OGE and had not passed through effective translational lift. We both sensed this at the same time, but our reactions were different.

My co-pilot increased collective and pitched the nose back, killing our airspeed and putting us into turbine gas temperature limiting and drooping the rotor before I could take the controls. I grabbed the controls and pitched the nose forward and, against all natural instincts, pushed the collective down and dove into the valley that was about 200 feet below. I had high ground on the left and right and a set of 20-foot wires along a goat trail at the bottom of the valley. My co-pilot was losing it, saying how sorry he was. He was no help to the crew.

For whatever reason, a conversation with an old standardization pilot ran through my head about a similar situation.



at high altitude and high temperatures for the first time. Even with right-seat rides and several performance planning classes, we managed to have a Class A accident and several close calls — one of which was mine.

We launched out of Guatemala City International Airport as a flight of two UH-60Ls, heading to the town of Caban. It was a typical mission profile of running as much water and food from the location

payload. We conducted a thorough crew brief on our power available, noting we did not have out-of-ground-effect power. Instead, we had the diagonal width of a soccer field to perform an airspeed over altitude takeoff before we went OGE as the field ended at the side of a cliff and dropped into a valley.

I was confident we had discussed the procedure enough and had a good grasp of the situation. We cranked



He had mentioned how he tried to make very minimal inputs into the controls while he was flying, so I managed to set the controls and checked the situation. Luckily, one crew chief had hopped up toward the center console and began to call my rotor, while the other crew chief monitored the wires we were quickly approaching.

**“Thankfully, the crew chiefs onboard were on their game because without their help, things might have turned out differently.”**

My intention was to get the airspeed up and then add in power, if I had any time remaining. The last rotor call from my crew chief was 88 percent. He said it was starting to climb, so I checked my airspeed and saw it had increased to about 40. I started adding power and hoped for the best. We managed to get enough rotor and speed to stop our descent about 20 feet above the wires. This enabled us to climb over the ridge at the end of the valley and continue with our mission.

Thankfully, the generators stayed online and we had the altitude to use. I never had the chance to jettison the tanks, and my co-pilot didn't get back to being a crew member for about 30 minutes into the flight. Thankfully, the crew chiefs onboard were on their game because without their help, things might have turned out differently. ■



**If it happens ...**

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## Dirty and Used

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST

I was a newly appointed safety officer for the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team with the Oregon Army National Guard and we were conducting annual training at the Orchard Combat Training Center located south of Boise, Idaho. I hadn't yet attended the Ground Safety Officer Course, so I really didn't know what I was doing. But as an armor officer, I was totally familiar with the multiple live-fire ranges our unit was conducting. I recalled my time as a second lieutenant and all the occasions in which an inspector or VIP visited us on the range. The first thing they wanted to see was our risk assessment.

What is a risk assessment? Many Soldiers think they're nothing more than a CYA, or cover your ass. Though they may appear to serve that purpose, risk assessments were designed by the Army primarily to protect Soldiers. Their real purpose is often lost, however, when Soldiers complete a risk assessment solely based on requirements. It becomes an exercise in checking the box and filing it in the range book, ready for any visitor's inspection. With the box checked, we feel we've completed the task and can now go on our merry way. But does this risk assessment do any good for the Soldiers on the ground? This led me to realize that any risk assessment is useless — unless it gets into the hands of the Soldiers.

I must confess I have had some experience filling out risk assessments. As a company

commander, I remember the work I put into them. I filled them out with two thoughts in mind. First, I didn't want any of my Soldiers to get hurt. Second, I wanted to make sure the controls I implemented actually got carried out. Reflecting on my years as a young lieutenant, I remember seeing the risk assessment for the first time when I showed it to a VIP. I often wondered

this tool called the risk assessment and it should be something more than a place filler in the VIP book.

As the unit's safety officer for the annual training exercise at Orchard, I started inspecting the ranges. I walked up to the officer-in-charge, like I had seen so many inspectors do in the past, and asked to see the risk assessment. I've seen the panicked look flash across a young



what good it did if we didn't look at it until someone asked for it.

I have been blessed in my career with outstanding noncommissioned officers who knew what needed to be done to keep Soldiers safe. I truly believe they were the only reason I was able to successfully conduct those ranges without any injury. Pure, dumb luck in getting to work with great NCOs is no way to keep Soldiers safe, though. It worked for me, but I would not want to push my luck. The Army has given us

officer's face when he or she has to tell me the risk assessment is back at the battalion headquarters, where it can be kept nice and clean.

When I was a young Soldier, I know if I had answered like that, I would have been standing at attention, listening to a very one-sided conversation with the inspecting officer. Though that may have been effective, it simply wasn't my style. So I pulled the OIC aside. According to his risk assessment, I asked him about the hazards identified and the controls



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put into place to ensure the safe operation of the ranges. Again, he did not know. I educated that OIC on what his job was — keeping Soldiers safe. The risk assessments are the tools to help him succeed in that endeavor.

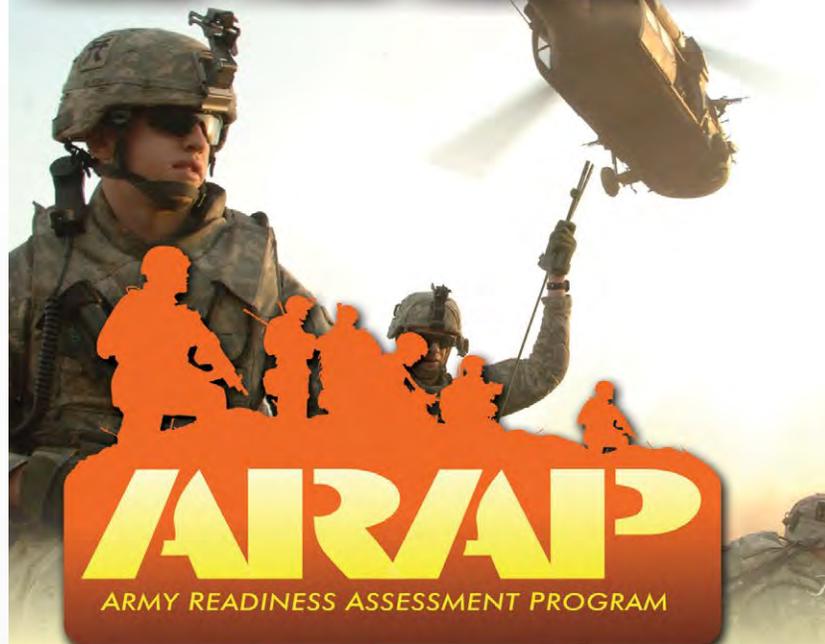
I continued drilling the OIC on how he intended to keep the Soldiers safe if he didn't know what to do. I could see it in his eyes; he was relying on the NCOs just as I did. As we have already discussed, 99 times out of 100 that works because the NCOs in our organizations are top notch. But there's the one time out of that 100 somebody does get hurt, so that's not good enough.

The whole point of the risk assessment is to protect Soldiers, not simply to check a box. A risk assessment is written before the event. This allows the commander to look at what can go wrong and make his or her decisions without putting faces to the Soldiers and having to make decisions immediately. Careful decisions made without the pressure of time are way better than decisions made on the fly.

The job doesn't end there, though. The risk assessment is just the start. No one can predict every hazard that may be encountered. In addition to briefing all of the Soldiers on the range about the hazards and controls, the next step is to make the risk assessment a living document. So, as issues are identified, the risk assessment should be updated. A clean piece of paper neatly printed and slid into a document protector is nice, but I will always be happier to see some handwritten additions or deletions. That shows me someone on the ground is using the risk assessment to its highest potential. It shows me that someone is actually using it and thinking about safety.

Remember, keeping Soldiers safe is the goal; it's not filling that little space in the VIP book just for the sake of filling it. I will always smile when I see a risk assessment that's dirty and used. They are like tanks in that regard. They're happiest when they get a little dirty. ■

## ARE YOU READY?



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

**Don't you want to protect your combat power?**

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## Blinded by the Light

LT. COL. JOSEPH A. HARVEY  
Director, Driving Directorate, U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center  
Fort Rucker, Alabama

**A**s I headed to post that morning, it was like any other day. What I didn't expect, however, was how Daylight Saving Time would affect my commute. As I turned east onto the highway, I was greeted by the blinding sun. My windshield immediately filled with daylight and my visibility was reduced to almost nothing.

My first instinct was to block the sun with my hand so I could see the road just ahead of me. But this method reduced my field of vision to 60 percent at best. I knew there had to be a better way to drive at this time of day, so I did some research. Here are some techniques I found to make my commute less treacherous.

The first method is avoidance. If I leave for work just 30 minutes earlier, I could avoid the sun before it breaks over the horizon. If I'm too lazy to get up earlier, I could instead leave 45 minutes later when the sun is high enough to not impair my vision. If I chose to travel at my regular time rather than earlier or later, another option is to alter my route so that I minimize the amount of time I am driving east into the sun.

A second method is to keep my windshield clean. Dirt or grime on the outside or inside of the windshield causes the light to scatter, increasing the glare. Cleaning my windshield before departing home would help cut down on the glare. Be aware, however, that using the windshield washer in this situation usually exacerbates the problem.

Another tip is to change my driving habits. When driving in these conditions, I should allow



extra space between my car and the vehicles ahead. Because my vision is limited, that extra distance gives me more time to react to any unexpected situation. Driving 5-10 mph slower than the speed limit will also help me in reacting to traffic dangers. In addition, if I allow myself

aftermarket visor that attaches to my vehicle's stock sun visor. Some of these products are adjustable to fill the gaps regular visors do not cover. Others are designed to be transparent, filtering out glare while still allowing you to see the road. Not all products are created equal,

**“Even with a good pair of sunglasses, you can still have problems when the sun is in your eyes.”**

a few extra minutes of travel time, I may not feel rushed in getting to my destination and be less apt to speed or drive aggressively.

Finally, I can filter out the sun using a couple of options. Wearing polarized sunglasses helps filter out the glare, but it's not a complete solution. Even with a good pair of sunglasses, you can still have problems when the sun is in your eyes. I could also purchase an

though, so do a little research to ensure you're purchasing an item with good sun-screening capabilities.

If your commute has you driving into the morning sun, consider incorporating some or all of these tips to improve your safety. After all, there aren't many things on the road that are scarier — or more dangerous — than a driver who can't see where he's going. ■



## The Reason for Two CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 WALLS

*Author's note: The following is an account of a situation that occurred during an aircrew training mission in an OH-58D(R) under day visual meteorological conditions in a garrison environment. The left seater was an instructor pilot with more than 2,000 hours in the primary aircraft. The right seater was a 500-hour pilot in command who was demonstrating proficiency in responding to an engine failure at cruise. The crew was in their third hour of flight, conducting evaluations on crew and individual tasks. Both aviators were current in the aircraft and familiar with working with one another, having flown together on numerous occasions. Of note, during this training maneuver, the throttle is rolled to idle to enter the autorotation and must be opened again by 400 feet above ground level. Additionally, the throttle manipulation is accomplished by the IP.*

**A**fter flying around the military reservation for proficiency training, as well as conducting a landing/pickup zone recon for a future operation, the aircraft cycled through the forward arming and refuel point at another airfield. After refueling, the crew departed along the reservation corridor structure to return to the assigned heliport. Upon return, the crew started a standards evaluation on the right seater to complete the requirements for his Annual Proficiency Readiness Test. The aircrew ran through a myriad of required tasks, then



entered the pattern to conduct required maneuvers — one of which was responding to an engine failure at cruise. Having conducted the required ground/hover prerequisite maneuvers, off they went.

The IP in the left seat demonstrated the first maneuver for proficiency as well as to practice his method of instruction. After successfully terminating with power, the left seater retained the flight controls and conducted another traffic pattern to demonstrate another autorotational decent ending by terminating with power. Over the last several minutes, the pattern had become crowded with aircraft. After yet another successful maneuver, the right seater took the flight controls and departed for another turn in the traffic pattern to demonstrate the same maneuver.

Established at entry altitude and on course for the runway, the crew was advised by air traffic control personnel to expedite the approach and sidestep to the sod

to sequence inbound instrument flight rule traffic. The throttle was rolled to idle while the right seater acknowledged ATC instructions without any verbal communication between the crew. The right seater entered the autorotation and adjusted the airspeed as necessary. The IP was assisting with systems monitoring as well as giving a real-time debrief of the maneuver.

Additionally, ATC was talking to the aircraft performing the autorotation while passing traffic advisories to others in the pattern. Passing through 400 feet AGL, the IP was still calling out system status while continuing to coach through the maneuver. The right seater twice asked, "Throttle open?" with the only response from the left seater being the continued system status callouts. Upon completion of the second query of the throttle position status, the right seater rotated the throttle toward the open position, only to be met by resistance from the left



seater. The right seater applied more force and the throttle rotated to the full open position.

At this point, the left seater stopped talking, ensured the throttle was open and performed only the essential callouts to finish landing the aircraft. The crew ended the maneuver safely and successfully and returned to the parking area for termination.

**“After feeling the throttle open in his hand, he finally grasped the situation fully and started listening to the right seater versus only acknowledging that someone was talking.”**

Upon discussion, the left seater admitted they were so fixated on their MOI and system calls that he was hearing the right seater, but not actually listening. After feeling the throttle open in his hand, he finally grasped the situation fully and started listening to the right seater versus only acknowledging that someone was talking. Additionally, both pilots acknowledged it would have been a wiser decision to just go around and accomplish the maneuver when there wasn't high density or inbound IFR traffic. Both pilots also agreed it is better to debrief a maneuver upon completion and not while it's happening. Such comments interfered with basic aircrew coordination.

Both pilots shared their stories and spread awareness of the deficiencies that occurred in their cockpit. The bottom line is there is a reason why we have two pilots in the aircraft. ■

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# 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.

# 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>



## THIS MONTH OCTOBER 2015



### Winter Road Rules

STEVE BISHEL  
U.S. Army Tank Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center  
Detroit Arsenal, Michigan

**W**hether you're a newly licensed driver or an experienced 88M with a "gazillion" miles logged, reduced traction from snow, ice and rain can make driving during the winter months especially dangerous. However, while winter weather does pose additional risks to drivers, they don't have to result in an accident. There are several things drivers can do to operate their tactical vehicles safely when weather conditions take a turn for the worst.

#### Maintenance

Conduct maintenance checks per the preventive maintenance

checks and services in your vehicle's technical manual. It is especially important to ensure the antifreeze level and protection is adequate for the winter environment. Also, make sure the windshield washer reservoir is filled with a washer fluid that provides proper cold weather protection. Because visibility is vital for safe driving, it's also a good idea to have new wipers installed. In addition, make sure your battery is in good condition and all lights — especially headlights and tail lights — are working properly.

#### Operation

To improve visibility, snow and

ice should be cleared from a vehicle's windows, mirrors, hood, roof, turn signals, tail lights and headlights before operation. If you're driving on ice and snow, reduce your speed and maintain a safe stopping distance. When climbing hills, accelerate slightly as you approach the hill and maintain a steady speed going up. This will allow the momentum of the vehicle to help carry you up the hill. Check the vehicle's TM for the proper gear settings for climbing and descending hills on ice or snow. Also be aware of black ice, which is an invisible, thin layer of ice on road surfaces, including bridges and

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KNOWLEDGE HOME



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overpasses. (Editor's note: For more on black ice, see the info box below.) Of course, you should always wear a seat belt and drive defensively regardless of the weather conditions.

## Braking

Operators must know what type of brake is on their vehicle so they can use the proper technique for stopping on ice or snow. For vehicles with conventional hydraulic brakes (no antilock brakes), use threshold braking by applying the brakes just short of lockup and then easing off the brake pedal slightly. Sudden braking will cause wheels to lock and the vehicle to slide out of control.

To stop a vehicle equipped with ABS, apply firm, steady pressure to the brake pedal. Do not pump brakes on a vehicle equipped with ABS. For vehicles equipped with air brakes, apply light, steady pressure; do not pump the brakes. For vehicles equipped with engine brakes, do not apply the engine brake when operating on slick surfaces (ice, snow or rain). Refer to the TM for the type of brakes on your vehicle and specific recommended operations.

**Black ice** — a thin sheet of ice on a dark roadway — is extremely dangerous because it's hard for drivers to detect before they're actually on it. Black ice forms when light rain or drizzle falls on a road surface below 32 F or when super-cooled fog droplets accumulate on bridges and overpasses. A roadway covered with black ice appears wet when the ambient temperature is below freezing.

Drivers must use extreme caution when driving on black ice. Vehicles that hit black ice

## FYI

The U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center's Driver's Training Toolbox has a series of winter driving presentations which can assist you in conducting training. It can be found on the USACRC website at <https://safety.army.mil/drivertrainingtoolbox>.

## Tires

Make sure your vehicle's tires have adequate tread depth — preferably 50 percent or more of the tread remaining — if you plan to operate in winter conditions. Most tactical vehicles have a mud/sand/snow recommended pressure for added traction in these conditions. Refer to the TM for the appropriate pressure for your vehicle's tires. For vehicles equipped with the Central Tire Inflation System, this would be the sand or snow setting. When no longer operating in snow, tire pressures will need to be increased per the TM.

## Tire chains

Tire chains are to be used on your vehicle when conditions (ice and

have greatly reduced traction, very little braking capability and extremely poor directional control — all problems that heighten the possibility of skidding. Ideally, vehicles should not be driven in black ice conditions. However, if the mission must go on, drivers should reduce their speed, accelerate slowly, increase the following distance between vehicles, brake very lightly and make all turns gradually and slowly.

snow) require additional traction such as in mountainous terrain. Select the appropriate tire chain as specified for your vehicle. If you are unfamiliar with using tire chains, it is recommended you conduct a trial fit on how to install and remove them before the start of a mission. Then you will already have the experience of using them when they are required.

Tire chains are designed to fit snugly; however, you should allow for some movement of the chain on the tire. Tighten chains by hand, rather than tools, to reduce the possibility of over-tightening. Also make sure to carry appropriate straps for tightening the chains if they are loose. Straps are listed by NSN below:

- 15 inches long, stretches 20 to 30 inches — NSN 5340-01-029-9084
- 21 inches long, stretches 26 to 42 inches — NSN 5340-01-231-6015
- 31 inches long, stretches 36 to 42 inches — NSN 5340-01-029-9085

Reference the appropriate TM for installation and restrictions regarding tire chains. When no longer operating in snow, the chains must be removed to avoid damage to the tires or vehicle.

## Extreme cold

Depending upon the type of system, your vehicle may have a winterization kit that can be installed for operation in extreme cold. Refer to the vehicle's TM for information on the installation, operation and maintenance of this additional equipment.

Winter weather conditions can challenge any driver. Follow the suggested guidelines above when operating your tactical vehicle in snow and ice and you should arrive at your destination safely. ■

# THE REIT COMES



- Treat every weapon as if it is loaded.
- Handle every weapon with care.
- Identify the target before you fire.
- Never point the muzzle at anything you don't intend to shoot.
- Keep the weapon on safe and your finger off the trigger until you intend to fire.

# READY ...OR NOT?

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<https://safety.army.mil>



## The Fix

RETIRED SGT. 1ST CLASS CRAIG A. DAILEY  
AMCOM, IMMC, UAS  
Redstone Arsenal, Alabama

**T**o be honest, I haven't always been the poster child for riding safely. I've been fortunate enough to survive my experiences and learn from them, but not everyone is so lucky. It's frustrating to see preliminary loss reports in my inbox telling me we've lost another Soldier in a motorcycle accident. Fortunately, this is a problem that can be fixed; but it's going to take leadership, responsibility, accountability and discipline.

### Leadership

As a leader, I always knew when one of my Soldiers made a large purchase because they couldn't do it without talking about it. My platoon leader (who was also a rider) and I always had the team leaders ensure their Soldiers were financially capable and mature enough to buy the bike. After that, we ensured they were sent to rider training.

It's the same approach we take in paratrooper training. As a jumpmaster, I'd never allow a trooper onto the aircraft, much less exit it, without personally inspecting and verifying the equipment was functionally safe and properly



secured. How many paratroopers exit aircraft every year without a fatality? Airborne accidents happen and people die. That's a risk we face, but we mitigate it as best we can. Why can't we approach reducing the risks involved with riding motorcycles the same way?

### Responsibility

Riders and leaders both bear responsibility for senseless motorcycle accidents. In most cases, it was their own stupidity, ignorance and inexperience that killed them. I get angry having to say it, but some people aren't mature enough to care for themselves. Once again, senior leaders are going to have to add another responsibility to their already overloaded plate. However, there are strategies for that.

First, as Soldiers return from deployments with pockets full of

**“Riders and leaders both bear responsibility for senseless motorcycle accidents.”**

money, strict adherence to safety regulations must be enforced. I believe Soldiers should have to turn over the keys to their bikes until they've obtained their Motorcycle Safety Foundation Basic RiderCourse certification. Then, a copy of their certification needs to become a part of their platoon sergeant's leader book. Within 12 to 18 months, they should be required to show their Experienced RiderCourse card. And that leads to the next issue — accountability.

### Accountability

Just because your DA Form 348 qualifies you to drive a motor pool full of vehicles doesn't mean you can waltz in and drive one you're

## Did You Know?

Army Regulation 385-10, The Army Safety Program, Chapter 11-7, Driver education, and Chapter 11-9, Motorcycle safety, define the Army's motorcycle training and personal protective equipment requirements. To view the document in its entirety, visit [http://www.apd.army.mil/pdf/files/r385\\_10.pdf](http://www.apd.army.mil/pdf/files/r385_10.pdf).



## “Accountability must include tough discipline — and that hasn’t always happened.”

not certified on. No motor officer would risk his career by authorizing Soldiers to drive vehicles they’re not qualified to operate because he knows he’d be held accountable. We hold Soldiers with automobiles accountable by checking their travel plans and inspecting their vehicles before four-day weekends. Why don’t we do the same for Soldiers with motorcycles? We have rules, but there’s no accountability above the rider’s level. If we’re holding riders accountable for their actions, then we must hold ourselves accountable for ensuring they’re qualified to ride.

### Discipline

Accountability must include tough discipline — and that hasn’t always happened. For example, one commander I served under mandated all motorcycles be stopped at the gates and their riders inspected for personal protective equipment and MSF training cards. However, riders found in violation weren’t cited like they would be if they were driving under the influence. Instead, they were turned

around and sent back into the fray lacking the knowledge and equipment to ride safely or according to regulations. Leadership should’ve required the rider to surrender his keys and impound the bike until the command issued a memorandum stating the Soldier has been disciplined (post traffic fine or Article 15 for failure to follow an order) and trained.

If leaders truly care about Soldiers, they must get tough to stop these senseless deaths. It’s a terrible loss for families and units when Soldiers return home safely after a year or more in combat only to kill themselves during the first three months they’re back. These Soldiers were someone’s responsibility. They were all defenders of our nation and died because of negligence and complacency.

### Bottom line

It’s time to hold commanders, NCOs and Soldiers responsible and accountable and use tough discipline where needed. Until then, it’s like sending troopers out the door without checking their chutes. ■

**SMART**

**S**AFE  
**M**ATURE  
**A**CCOUNTABLE  
**R**ELIABLE  
**T**RUSTWORTHY

**BE a SMART SOLDIER**

Be **SMART**. Protect yourself and those around you. The Army was built on discipline, leadership and regulations, and the regulation says someone has to ensure everyone in the vehicle wears a seat belt.

*Be that **SMART** someone.*  
Learn more at <https://safety.army.mil>



## A Stark Reminder

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 4 ROBERT JUSTISON  
Delaware Army National Guard  
New Castle, Delaware

In May 2004, I was a member of Company B, 1st Battalion, 150th Aviation Regiment, in the Delaware Army National Guard. Our unit was mobilized in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom III, and our UH-60 aviation company was assigned to provide troop and VIP transport missions in Kuwait and Iraq. This was our first combat deployment.

While at the mobilization station, our UH-60A/L aircraft were being sent out for upgrades and a lot of modifications that required the replacement of old wiring. The upgrades were done by a couple of different contractors, and all eight of our aircraft were modified prior to our arrival in Kuwait. All company aircraft were

**“The heat generated was enough to arc weld the wire retaining clip to the control tube.”**

used for training and flown to the port and put onto a ship.

After arriving in Kuwait, I was assigned to fly a routine VIP mission to pick up the division commander and bring him to our base. The total flight time was to be about 30 minutes. I was the pilot in command, sitting in the right seat, flying with another experienced aviator.



The crew and I arrived about an hour and a half before liftoff to complete our preflight and configure the aircraft for the mission. The aircraft preflight was completed without finding any deficiencies. The crew and I then got into the aircraft and started going through each item on the checklist. The auxiliary power unit was started to provide AC electrical power to operate aircraft systems on the ground prior to starting the two main engines.

The checks included the flight controls, which is done prior to the first flight of the day. It tests both the hydraulic systems and the helicopter flight controls and is normally accomplished by the pilot in the right seat. One part of it is to move the cyclic control stick through its full range of motion. The operator's manual states there should be no binding or restrictions during this test. However, while moving the cyclic controls, I noticed a slight restriction, immediately followed by bright sparks and black smoke coming from the cabin

ceiling between the co-pilot and pilot's seats. We immediately shut down the aircraft APU, turned off the battery and exited the aircraft without further incident. We then used our company spare aircraft and completed the mission.

Fortunately, nobody was injured; however, there was damage to the aircraft. The cause of the sparks and smoke was due to a wiring bundle being cut from one of the aircraft control tubes. The heat generated was enough to arc weld the wire retaining clip to the control tube. Most, if not all, of the electrical relays in the aircraft were blown out. It was a long time before repairs were completed and the aircraft returned to service.

This incident could have had serious and/or catastrophic results if it had happened in flight. It was a stark reminder of how important it is to always use and follow all checklists. Remember, the checklists and their associated steps are there to protect both personnel and equipment. ■



## Kill the Chill — Safely COMPILED BY THE KNOWLEDGE STAFF

**T**here are few things more miserable than shivering in a tent on a cold winter night. To help kill the chill, many Soldiers in the field warm their tents with space heaters. The Army has rules and regulations in place regarding space heater usage to keep Soldiers from accidentally setting their tents ablaze. What Soldiers should know, however, is many of these guidelines also apply to using portable heating devices in their homes.

Portable heating devices, including space heaters, are the leading cause of deaths in home heating equipment-related fires, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Every year, an estimated 25,000 residential fires are associated with the use of space heaters, accounting for more than 300 fatalities. In addition, another 6,000 persons receive emergency room care for burn injuries associated with contacting the hot surfaces of room heaters, mostly in non-fire situations.

Not surprisingly, the peak months for home heating fires are December, January and February, accounting



for 43 percent. As we approach these potentially deadly months, keep in mind these suggestions from the CPSC for the selection, safe use and maintenance of electric, gas, wood and kerosene space heaters:

- Select a space heater with a guard around the flame or the heating element. This will help keep children, pets and clothing away from the heat source.
- When selecting a heater, look for one that has been tested and certified by a nationally recognized testing laboratory. These heaters have been determined to meet specific safety standards, and manufacturers are required to provide important use and care information to the consumer.
- Buy a heater that is the correct size for the area you want to heat. The wrong size heater could produce more pollutants and may not be an efficient use of energy.
- Read and follow the manufacturer's operating instructions. Keep the owner's manual in a convenient place to refer to when needed.
- Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- Keep doors open to the rest of the house if you are using an unvented fuel-burning space heater. This helps to prevent pollutant build-up and promotes proper combustion. Even vented heaters require ventilation for proper combustion.
- Never leave a space heater on when you go to sleep or leave the area. For fuel-fired heaters, dangerous levels of carbon monoxide could accumulate or uncontrolled burning could cause a fire.
- Never use or store flammable liquids (such as gasoline) around a space heater. The flammable vapors can flow from one part of the room to another and be ignited by the open flame or by an electrical spark.
- Be aware mobile homes require specifically designed heating equipment. Only electric or vented fuel-fired heaters should be used.
- Place heaters at least 3 feet away from objects such as bedding, furniture and drapes.
- Never use heaters to dry clothes

### FYI

For more information about space heater safety, visit the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission website at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) or the National Fire Protection Association website at [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org).



# KNOWLEDGE

OFFICIAL SAFETY MAGAZINE OF THE U.S. ARMY

## “It’s also a good idea to check your smoke detectors monthly and install a carbon monoxide alarm in your home, especially if you use a fuel-burning space heater.”

or shoes. Do not place heaters where towels or other objects could fall onto them and start a fire.

It’s also a good idea to check your smoke detectors monthly and install a carbon monoxide alarm in your home, especially if you use a fuel-burning space heater. Known as the silent killer, carbon monoxide, or CO, is a poisonous, colorless, odorless gas. It is produced as a result of

the incomplete burning of natural gas and other carbon-containing materials such as kerosene, oil, propane, coal, gasoline and wood.

The symptoms of CO poisoning, which include shortness of breath, nausea, dizziness, lightheadedness and headaches, are often confused with the flu, food poisoning or other illnesses. The effects of CO vary, but people with heart or lung disease,

elevated CO blood levels (smokers), the elderly, young children and fetuses are the most susceptible. At high concentration levels, CO can kill an individual in minutes.

The National Fire Protection Association recommends securing only those CO alarms which have been listed by an independent testing laboratory. These alarms should be installed in central locations outside each separate sleeping area. If bedrooms are spaced apart, each area will need a CO alarm.

Heat is one thing no one wants to do without during cold weather. By following a few simple guidelines and using a little common sense when operating space heaters, you can ensure you’re warming your home safely. ■

**MAKE SOUND RISK DECISIONS.  
REDUCE ACCIDENTAL LOSS.  
INCREASE COMBAT POWER.**

**Have you heard about the features on GRAT?**  
GRAT provides you with the ability to electronically sign risk management worksheets as well as save draft worksheets. It will also automatically save them before the program times out, which is now relayed by a countdown timer and notice.

**GRAT**  
GROUND RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL

<https://safety.army.mil>

# HERE IT COMES

Are you ready to hit the road?

- Have your vehicle serviced
- Plan your route
- Pack an emergency road kit
- Check the weather forecast
- Get plenty of rest
- Complete a TRiPS assessment

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U.S. ARMY



<https://safety.army.mil>





## Hunting for Trouble GLEN JORDAN Camp Shelby, Mississippi

It was late November in southern Mississippi. The weather throughout the week had been cool with scattered showers — conditions just right for a great weekend of deer hunting. I was in my study, cleaning my deer rifle and getting my ammunition ready for the hunt. Once I finished, I gathered my hunting clothes and took it all out to my carport so it would be ready for the next day.

Once I had my gear loaded in the hunting box and secured my rifle in my gun scabbard, I started the inspection on my Arctic Cat 500 all-terrain vehicle. About two months earlier, I'd taken an ATV safety training course conducted by my unit and taught by one of my officers. He covered proper riding techniques

### FYI

The ATV Safety Institute has informative videos and classes available to help riders hone their skills. Check them out online at <http://www.atvsafety.org/>.

in different types of terrain, safety inspections — to include T-CLOCS — and proper personal protective equipment requirements.

With that training still fresh in my mind, I completed my inspection checklist and made sure the gas tank was full. I then gathered my PPE (helmet, gloves



and goggles) and loaded the ATV onto the trailer. I completed my preparations about 10:30 p.m. and went to bed.

As expected, 4 a.m. came early. I stumbled out of bed, told my wife goodbye and headed for the door. Before I left, however, I climbed on the trailer and started up the ATV, just to make sure it would run. It was purring like a kitten, so I shut it off, got in the truck and headed to my friend's house. After loading his ATV and hunting gear onto the trailer, we started the 45-minute drive to our hunting location.

Once we arrived, we unloaded both ATVs from the trailer, loaded our equipment (guns, treestands and backpacks) and took off down the trail to our dismount spot. It was just before dawn, so we had on our headlights as we went one behind the other through the woods. I was in the lead and

my friend was about 20-30 feet behind me. It took us about 15 minutes to reach our dismount point, where we unloaded our gear and walked the rest of the way to our hunting spot.

We reconnoitered the area and picked spots about 200 yards apart. I climbed a tree and set up my stand while my friend settled in a blind on the ground. For the next few hours, squirrels, birds and armadillos scattered throughout the woods making all kinds of racket. That was fine, but where were the deer?

As the afternoon passed and we'd yet to see even a single doe, we decided to call it quits. We walked back to our ATVs, packed our gear, and unloaded our guns and secured them in the scabbards. As we departed, I was leading the way. It was dark now, so we again had our



lights on as we moved back down the trail.

As I approached a trail intersection, I stopped my ATV to get my bearings and make sure I was heading in the right direction. When I figured out the correct trail was straight ahead, I let off the brakes and began to move forward. Unaware that I had stopped, my friend came flying around the corner and slammed into the rear of my ATV.

The impact sent him flying over the handlebars and to the ground. I quickly shut off my four-wheeler and ran to see if he was OK. Fortunately, he was wearing his helmet, goggles and gloves and only suffered a small scratch on his arm. His ATV didn't fare as well, but it is still drivable. He lost one headlight and the plastic grill cover was broken. After we picked up the pieces, we rode back to the trailer, packed our hunting gear and headed home.

As we drove home, we ate our sandwiches and discussed what had happened. The following points summarize the lessons we learned.

1. We failed to conduct a risk assessment for the trip. We had been hunting together before, which led us to become complacent.
2. My friend was driving an unfamiliar ATV. He had borrowed his son-in-law's four-wheeler because his battery was dead.
3. We failed to consider that when riding through the woods at night or during limited visibility, you have to reduce your speed and increase the amount of space between vehicles.
4. Wearing proper PPE protects you. In this case, it worked just as it was designed.
5. Don't conduct an inspection on your ATV by yourself. Have a friend or family member inspect it with or after you. They may find something you overlooked.
6. Take a safety course before going out into the woods.

We're inundated with messages that warn us to drive and ride safely and responsibly. Remember, though, those rules also apply to any off-road activities as well. Be safe! ■



<https://safety.army.mil>

Army Safe is Army Strong and that starts with a Soldier's Family. Have the information to help you and your Family stay SAFE.





## Avoiding a New Standard

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 3 BRAD W. SMITH  
B Company, 1-185th Assault Helicopter Battalion  
Florida Army National Guard  
Brooksville, Florida

In today's fast-paced operational tempo and multiple mission sets with multi-national forces, it is important to know how our allies operate in a similar circumstances. Likewise, it is important for our allies to know how we operate in regard to mission-essential details that may be required when working together. I state it this way because of a situation my unit encountered while deployed to Basrah, Iraq.

The British military is a highly trained, fully functional force. But without guidance and being properly informed by us, they are not going to know how we conduct our missions, especially a non-aviation-related unit. They train for their missions in conjunction with aviation assets using British aircraft — just as we train with our own.

We were a UH-60 lift asset assigned to a task force operating in conjunction with British SAS ground units. They were a great asset from an operations standpoint, but somewhere along the line there was a break in communication. It was clear we had not briefed them regarding what we expected of them to successfully execute a mission safely in terms of the way we train and operate — most importantly, the planning phase. The question you must ask yourself is this: Would this be a failure of the line unit or a higher command? In our situation, it was perceived to be neither. But mitigating factors were not in place to correct the situation.



Overall, our mission planning at a company level was more than adequate. The problems became apparent as missions changed. These changes did not occur within the allotted timeframe and proper intelligence was not available as quickly as it was required. With the understanding that we were in a dynamic period and with consideration of mission type, we continued doing the best we could to reduce risk. With pressure from above, we were pressed to proceed with little regard to the regulatory and statutory failures in the process. The people responsible were never held accountable and probably not even aware of the chaos they were creating at the lower levels.

Rules and procedures are set in place for a reason. When people are not held to a standard, they automatically fall below it at some point. Over time, if allowed, a new standard arises that doesn't reach the quality of the original.

With the assets at stake, including Soldiers and civilians of varying nationalities, we can't afford to allow these slippages to occur. It is our responsibility to make it known that we will not accept it.

At the unit level, as small as it is, this should be openly accepted and not frowned upon by higher command. A system has been put in place and we are to enforce those standards. The only exceptions are the possible prevention of a catastrophic accident, saving the lives of our Soldiers and the financial loss that would be incurred with it. Is it worth it to take that shortcut?

This message must be echoed throughout the Army. Standards must be enforced and details must be disseminated no matter how small or seemingly insignificant at the time. We are not in the business of just getting by. Getting by or just letting it go kills our Soldiers. ■

Get the tools before  
the road gets rough.



# Driver's Training Toolbox

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





## Beware of the Blister

VERONIQUE HAUSCHILD  
Injury Prevention Program, U.S. Army Public Health Center (Provisional)  
Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland

**M**ost of us have experienced the pain of a friction blister. These injuries form when an object, such as a sock, shoe or strap, is repeatedly moved across a part of the body with enough force to cause the layers of skin to release heat. The heat causes redness and a separation, or cleft, between the outermost layer of the skin and rest of the layers. The cleft then fills with fluid, causing a raised area on the skin.

Blisters typically form on the toes, feet and ankles, but they can also occur on the hands or other places where there is repeated rubbing, such as the torso from the straps of a heavy backpack. Because these injuries often only cause discomfort and don't require medical treatment, they are sometimes described as "just a blister." Some blisters, however, can become temporarily debilitating for Soldiers, forcing them to restrict certain activities and limit physical training. In some cases, friction blisters develop into infections that require antibiotics and medical treatment. As one of the most common injuries among Soldiers, friction blisters can have a notable adverse impact on military readiness.

Activities such as marching



and running are the most common causes of blisters in the military. A recent review of injuries associated with marching or hiking showed heavy load carriage increases the risk of foot blisters. While Soldiers may not be able to avoid some activities that put them at risk for developing blisters, there are precautions they can take to minimize the likelihood of developing one and/or reduce the severity of any that do develop.

Studies provide evidence that some people may have a higher risk of developing blisters. For example, having no foot arch or flat feet, or being of an ethnicity other than African American, can increase your risk of getting a blister. While these factors cannot be changed, others that increase the risk of blisters can be modified. The U.S. Army Public Health Center (Provisional)

offers the following tactics that might be helpful in reducing the risk of developing a blister:

### Adaptation

To help your skin become more resistant:

- Slowly increase the duration and intensity of blister-causing activities.
- Use the same boots/shoes, gloves or load weight as you increase activity.

### Socks

Keep skin dry:

- Synthetic socks — made from acrylic, nylon or polyester, rather than cotton — that ventilate and wick moisture away from the feet are recommended, especially during long-distance marching or running.
- Some people advocate wearing a double layer of synthetic socks since a second layer stops the first from rubbing



# KNOWLEDGE

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## FYI

The Mayo Clinic recommends keeping a blister intact to help reduce the risk of infection. However, if a blister becomes too painful and medical help is not available, the following measures can be taken to drain it:

- Wash your hands and the blister with soap and warm water.
- Swab the blister with iodine.
- Sterilize a clean, sharp needle by wiping it with rubbing alcohol.
- Use the needle to puncture the blister. Aim for several spots near the blister's edge. Let the fluid drain, but leave the overlying skin in place.
- Apply an ointment (Vaseline, Plastibase, other) to the blister and cover it with a nonstick gauze bandage. If a rash appears, stop using the ointment.
- Change the dressing every day. Apply more ointment and a bandage.

against the skin. Others, however, prefer a single-layer loop-stitched sock, as less heat is generated than with two layers. Scientific evidence does not clearly indicate which is best. This may vary with individual risk factors.

Other options to consider include:

### Shoes

Minimize contact between the foot and shoe:

- Make sure toes do not touch the end of the shoe while walking. Consider a wide toe box with room for toes to wiggle.
- Purchase shoes later in

the day since feet may swell half a size larger throughout the day or after an activity.

- Do not leave shoes/boots on radiators or near heaters since this can cause them to shrink and the seams to protrude.

### Taping and skin coverings

- Certain skin coverings have been shown to help absorb friction during movement, which can reduce blister occurrence or severity.
- Zinc oxide tape has been anecdotally reported in running communities to prevent blisters from forming or minimizing further injury to an existing blister. Other products referred to as "blister plasters" will expand in response to friction and protect the area from blisters forming or getting worse.

### Insoles

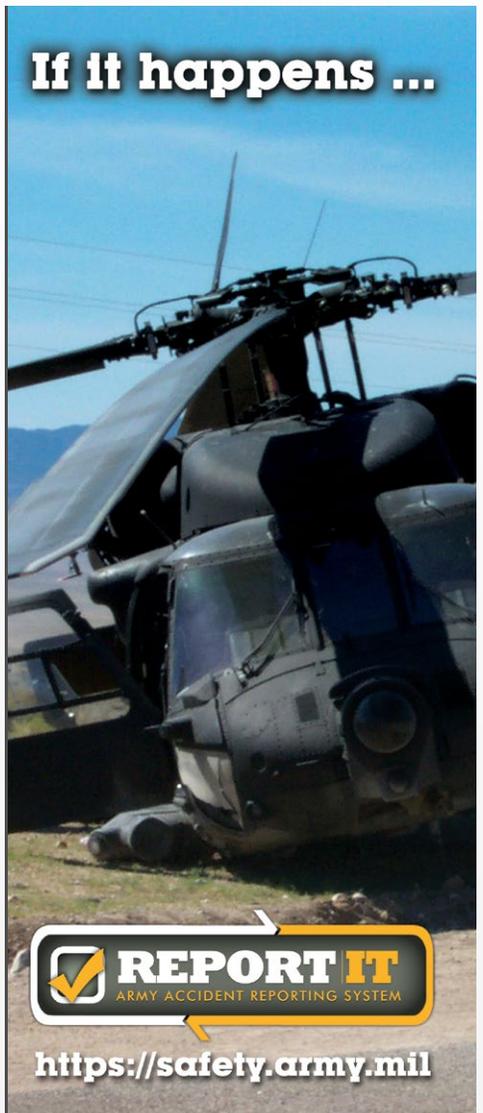
- A closed-cell neoprene insole was found to reduce the incidence of blisters in U.S. Coast Guard recruits.
- Anecdotal reports suggest properly fitted insoles can reduce blisters, but ill-fitting insoles can increase them.

### Coatings

- Some athletes advocate using products such as petroleum jelly to reduce friction and prevent chafing and blisters.
- While prior studies suggested antiperspirants may reduce blisters, there is a risk of skin irritation, so it is not

specifically recommended.

There is limited scientific evidence validating the effectiveness of most blister-preventing tactics among large populations. What works for some may not work for others, so it's up to the individual Soldier to determine their own best practices to avoid the pesky, painful blister. ■



# HERE IT COMES

are you ready for the ride?



## When riding on an Army installation:

- During hours of darkness or reduced visibility, bicycles must be equipped with an operable headlight or taillight.
- Riders must wear a reflective upper garment.
- Riders must wear a Consumer Product Safety Commission-approved helmet.
- Wearing headphones, earphones or other listening devices is prohibited.
- Yield to traffic when appropriate.
- Go with the traffic flow.
- Obey all traffic laws.
- Look before turning.



# 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?



ARMY STRONG:



<https://safety.army.mil>



## Rolling Blunder

THOMAS ANDERSON



It was my last day on the rifle range. Actually, it was the last range I would fire on in my Marine Corps career. After earning another "expert" badge, I left with a feeling of accomplishment. I could now put a 16th award bar on my rifle badge, as every trip to the range had resulted in expert qualification.

It was about 3 p.m. on a chilly but sunny Friday afternoon when I arrived home and passed on the good news to my family. A quick check with my wife confirmed dinner was still about an hour and a half away. A knowing smile crossed my face as I realized I had time for a nice ride over some winding country roads in the area.

Several factors during range week had kept me from riding my motorcycle as much as I'd liked, so I was eager to take it out. I mentally ran through the sitrep (sunny but a bit chilly, total of 90 minutes available) and headed to the garage to warm up the scooter. I donned my leather jacket and noticed the reflective vest was still attached. I considered removing it, but, hey, it's a black and

silver vest, so it doesn't cost me too many cool points. Once my bike was warm, I put on my Department of Transportation-approved helmet and full-length gauntlet leather gloves. Remembering the chill, as well as the fact that I might be returning at twilight, I also put on my chaps to cut the wind. That's when I noticed my feet.

I was wearing a nice pair of hiking boots. The boots were not my first choice for riding gear, but they seemed sturdy enough. I briefly considered going back inside to change into my riding

boots, but by that point I'd already lost at least 10 minutes of precious riding time. Surely these boots would be fine for a short ride near home. (I bet you're seeing the writing on the wall, aren't you?)

Once in the wind, my worries began shedding off me like leaves falling from trees. As I rolled through the curves, I was reminded why I ride. A quick glance at the trip meter snapped me back to reality, though. I was about 12 miles from having to go to my reserve tank. "No problem," I thought, "Just a short detour to the edge of town for some gas and I'll be back on the road."

About five minutes later, I pulled into the gas station. Of course, every pump was occupied. I didn't want this little pit stop to eat up any more of my time than necessary, so I decided to find another station rather than wait in line. As I approached the exit, I saw a car waiting to turn left. I put on my turn signal and pulled up next to the car to prepare to turn right. However, when I attempted to put my foot down so I could stop and check traffic, it wouldn't move.

Confused, I tried to free my foot as I began to fall to the left. As my

**"When I took it off to check, blood poured out of the glove and onto the ground. My fingertip was dangling enough to let me know a trip to the hospital was in my future."**



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shoulder hit the passenger door of the car next to me, the bike fell onto my left leg. Luckily, the driver heard me hit the car and stopped. After I killed the engine, a man who was at the gas station helped me lift up the bike — my foot still stuck in its trap.

All appeared fine with both vehicles and I seemed unhurt except for a strange feeling in my left glove. When I took it off to check, blood poured out of the glove and onto the ground. My fingertip was dangling enough to let me know a trip to the hospital was in my future. I put on my glove to hold everything in place and then rode home so my wife

could drive me to the naval hospital.

So how did this accident even happen? Unfortunately, my impatience was to blame — namely my unwillingness to give up five minutes of cruising time to put on riding boots. You see, the tread pattern on my hiking boots fit perfectly around my bike's peg, which is spring loaded to prevent dragging. The spring allowed the peg to lift far enough that my foot caught between the peg and shift lever. This prevented me from putting my foot down to keep the bike from falling. I'd failed to adhere to a very basic rule of motorcycling —

ATGATT (all the gear, all the time).

After being told I'd probably lose my fingertip — or at least never have a fingernail again — I am happy to report the tip and nail are still in place. (Thank you, Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune!) You can bet that I'll never take my bike out again without first putting on all of my personal protective equipment. I can tell you from firsthand experience that wearing proper PPE from head to ankle is not quite enough to avoid becoming a member of Rolling Blunder motorcycle club. ■

**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 U.S Army Combat Readiness Center MMP website for some examples of active mentoring programs.

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



## Don't Add Another Risk

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 CHAD OLSEN  
A Company, 2nd Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment  
10th Combat Aviation Brigade  
Fort Drum, New York

**T**he majority of military aviators know of the pressures of flying in a combat environment due to the deployments they've endured to help rid the world of terrorism. Therefore, we put forth a lot of effort into learning how to become better and safer pilots to accomplish a mission in an environment that is all too unforgiving. Although we constantly practice and rehearse various types of combat scenarios, we sometimes fail to recognize the pressures pilots endure to do a good job and successfully complete each mission. In turn, we allow ourselves to get too worked up and make faulty decisions. Here's an example:

It was a regular summer day in Iraq, with the temperature in the low 100s and plenty of



base. This would take place only after we completed a mission to uncover weapons caches scattered throughout the area. The mission had been briefed well, and everyone involved had a thorough understanding of what was required.

Due to the number of

Chalk 4 apparently suffered a hard landing. The incident caused the tail wheel fork assembly to become detached from the rest of the tail landing gear assembly. If one of the Soldiers that had just been dropped off hadn't gotten the crew chief's attention, the crew may never have realized the damage to the aircraft.

Apparently, the pilot had done all he could to maintain separation between his aircraft and the one in front of him. Still, his approach was too fast and caused the final touchdown to be a little too hard. His anticipation to land possibly caused him to reduce the power too quickly.

Even though I did not participate in this mission, I know both of the pilots flying that day pretty well. Both are terrific people to work with. One of the pilots has flown more than 2,000

**“Apparently, the pilot had done all he could to maintain separation between his aircraft and the one in front of him.”**

dust lingering in the air. We were tasked with a fairly simple operation to move a large number of Iraqi and American forces from an unsecured location back to the forward operating

personnel that needed to be picked up and dropped off, the flight of four UH-60Ls was to make multiple trips to complete the mission. Everything seemed to be going as expected until



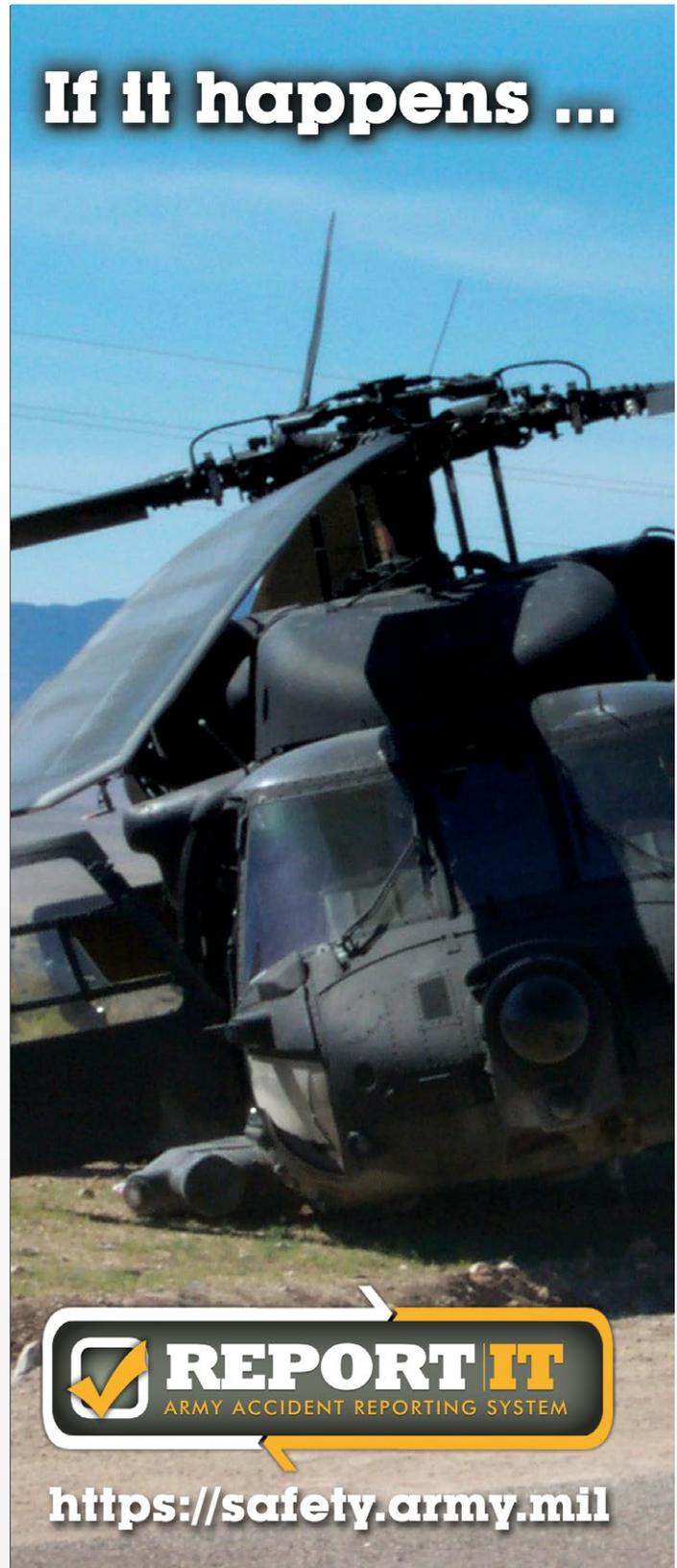
hours, while the other, who apparently was on the controls at the time of the accident, hadn't been flying for too long. Regardless, he had a great attitude and always showed a tremendous amount of dedication to becoming a better pilot.

I feel the amount of pressure an individual puts on oneself sometimes

**“Allowing yourself to put too much pressure on what you are trying to accomplish can cause you to make an unclear decision or too quick of a control movement.”**

causes accidents like this despite the desire to do everything right. Allowing yourself to put too much pressure on what you are trying to accomplish can cause you to make an unclear decision or too quick of a control movement.

These pilots walked away from what could have been a more serious event as better and safer aviators who saw firsthand the unforgiving and unexpected dangers of combat flying. We should always understand the hazards we face on each flight and the pressure we can put on ourselves to accomplish a mission. Don't add another risk to your flight. You already have enough to start with. ■





## Real Men Read Manuals

LT. COL. SCOTT A. REDMAN  
Michigan Army National Guard  
Lansing, Michigan

I have heard it said several times, “Real men don’t read directions.” Apparently, some people think the idea of actually paying attention to all the papers (directions, manuals, safety notices) included with a new purchase is unnecessary to fully understand how that item works. As a safety professional, I could not disagree more. I almost always go to the opposite extreme. Notice I said, “Almost.”

Whenever I buy a new item, one of the first things I do is read the owner’s manual. Over the years, I believe this practice has served me well. Recently, though, I bought a used drill press at auction, and it didn’t come with an instruction manual. Eager to try it out, I immediately went home, unloaded the drill press and plugged it in. I figured if it worked, I got a good deal.

Unfortunately, all the drill press did was make a humming noise — as if it wanted to start but needed some help. Noticing the drive belt on top of the machine, I thought, “I bet all I need to do is give the belt a



**“After I stopped the bleeding, I visited a medical clinic, swallowed a couple of pain pills and endured a great deal of embarrassment.”**

tug to free it up.” It freed up all right. In fact, it spun so fast that it pulled my finger into the pulley! After I stopped the bleeding, I visited a medical clinic, swallowed a couple of pain pills and endured a great deal of embarrassment.

I learned two things that

day I want to pass along. First, if you ever purchase a used item like I did, search online for the operator’s manual. It will contain useful safety information (like making you aware of missing parts such as a drive belt and pulley guard!). Second, always inspect your used purchases to identify any signs of modification or breakage by the previous owner. As a friend said to me after seeing my bandaged finger, “You know they were probably selling it for a reason.” You can bet I won’t make the same mistake again. ■

### Did You Know?

Many manufacturers place their products’ operator’s manuals, installation instructions and safety notices on their websites for easy downloading and printing.



## The Other Driver

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 4 JEREMY FRANKHOUSE  
U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence  
Fort Rucker, Alabama

**R**oad trips can be dangerous, so I always take the steps I think are necessary to be prepared. I plan ahead, check my route on the map and make sure my vehicle is serviced and ready to go. However, I could never have anticipated what happened to my family on a Sunday in Florida. Our new vehicle was totaled and I wound up in the hospital — not because of a crash on the highway, but from an accident in a parking lot! Here's what happened.

I was stationed at Fort Rucker, Alabama, and my wife and I had planned to spend the weekend in Destin, Florida, with our two daughters. We'd made hotel arrangements for Saturday night and planned to return late Sunday evening. The weather on the way down wasn't as forecast (imagine that). Instead, the skies were overcast and the clouds threatened rain.

By the time we got to Destin it was raining, so we spent the afternoon exploring the town. We were hoping the weather would be better on Sunday, but no such luck. It started raining in the morning and didn't look like it was going to clear up anytime soon. We eventually gave up on the weather and decided to head home. We'd been on the road for an hour or so when we stopped for coffee at what we thought was a gas station. It was actually some sort of gift shop, but since we were already stopped, I thought I'd take the opportunity to check something out in the owner's manual before we took off again.

We were about 20 feet off the road and facing the direction of travel. My wife was in the back seat between the two child car seats, trying to keep the girls occupied. I was looking down and reading the owner's manual, so I never saw the Pontiac Firebird coming at us.



The 19-year-old behind the wheel was driving his father's car way too fast for the road conditions. The vehicle hydroplaned and slid off the road and into the parking lot straight for our vehicle. He struck my left-rear bumper so hard it spun my car around twice.

### FYI

Parents, it's up to you to ensure your children are properly restrained in a car seat that is appropriate for their age, height and weight. Visit the Safe Kids Worldwide website for tips and instructions for properly installing a car seat at [http://www.safekids.org/safetytips/field\\_risks/car-seat?gclid=COC9ZeFpMcCFVg8gQodwclLaQ](http://www.safekids.org/safetytips/field_risks/car-seat?gclid=COC9ZeFpMcCFVg8gQodwclLaQ).

I regained consciousness about four hours later. I'd suffered a minor concussion and had two staples in my head from where I was thrown into the door frame during the crash. My wife was beaten up by the girls' car seats and had the worst black eye I'd ever seen. She also had a large bruise on her back.

Fortunately, the girls weren't injured, though one ended up on her back in the rear of our vehicle, still strapped into her car seat. I'm not sure how that happened because I'd secured it with the shoulder belt according to the seat's instructions before we'd started driving.

We later called a friend to come and get us. After we left the hospital, we stopped by the junkyard where our car had been towed to get our stuff. Our new car was destroyed. The rear was crushed, the floor was cracked all the way to the front and the frame was bent.

Although our injuries left us a bit uncomfortable for a while, we eventually recovered. It took us a month of fighting with the insurance company, but we ultimately got our claim paid off and were able to replace our vehicle. Given the circumstances, this whole incident could have been a lot worse.

I still plan my road trips just as I always have in the past. However, I now have child safety seats secured with three-point restraints instead of only a shoulder belt. And no matter how safe I think I'm being, I'm always on the lookout for the other driver. ■



## Make It Personal

CAPT. C. TRAVIS WARD  
Oklahoma Army National Guard

**W**e all have accepted the fact that if you are in aviation long enough you are going to bury a friend or two. We also know and accept that our friends might have to do the same for us. With that in mind, why don't we do everything possible to prevent mishaps from happening?

Most of us have seen what happens in a unit when a mishap occurs. It gets personal. We have the memorials and say things like, "At least they died doing what they love." We tell ourselves, "That's the price of doing business." Then we give the family a hug and get back into the cockpit.

With many accidents there are findings of pilot or leadership failure, but you'll be hard pressed to find one that says the unit failed. However, "somebody always knows" pops up frequently in safety training or in articles written about accident prevention. And that is the point. How many times has it been said, "That is an accident waiting to happen," which is great in the identifying hazards category? The problem is that's usually where it stops and, more times than not, that accident finally happens.

The fact we accept aviation as a dangerous business needs to stop. Everybody takes the tactical risk seriously and the Army invests billions of dollars in equipment and training to reduce the lives lost in combat. Why? We make it personal.

Every member in the unit makes it their responsibility to negate the tactical risk. There is no way to know how many mishaps have



been prevented over the years because of those efforts, but it is not enough. We keep having the same accidents over and over. Why? We don't make it personal until after the fact. If you took the heartfelt, solemn condolences given to a family of "let me know if there is anything I can do" and applied it before we lose a Soldier, we could greatly reduce our accident rate.

Granted, we can't prevent every accident from happening, but we can prevent some. As for the ones we can't prevent, we can at least lessen the severity. By making it personal, every unit member can help reduce the times the flag is flown at half-staff because of a preventable mishap. Safety is part of our values, ethos and creed and should be taken to heart. We have to do everything possible to keep our Soldiers from needlessly suffering because of preventable accidents. Each one of us has to take the threat of an accident as serious as we do the improvised explosive device or manned portable air defense system threats.

During my 12 years of service, the toughest duty I have had was being a casualty assistance officer. It is never easy to lose a comrade, but when it is a senseless loss, handling it is so much harder when you have to watch a family deal with that loss, trying to believe that their loved one died for a cause. Once that family realizes it all could have been prevented, dealing with the death becomes that much harder.

There was no one defining cause, just a chain of bad decisions and the assumption of risk that outweighed the benefit. That, and if the unit would have made the personal commitment to mitigate the accidental risk like they did mitigating the tactical risk, would have made a difference. At least then the families of victims could have been told we truly did everything we could to prevent the tragedy. ■

# ARE YOU READY?

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

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

Don't you want to protect your combat power?

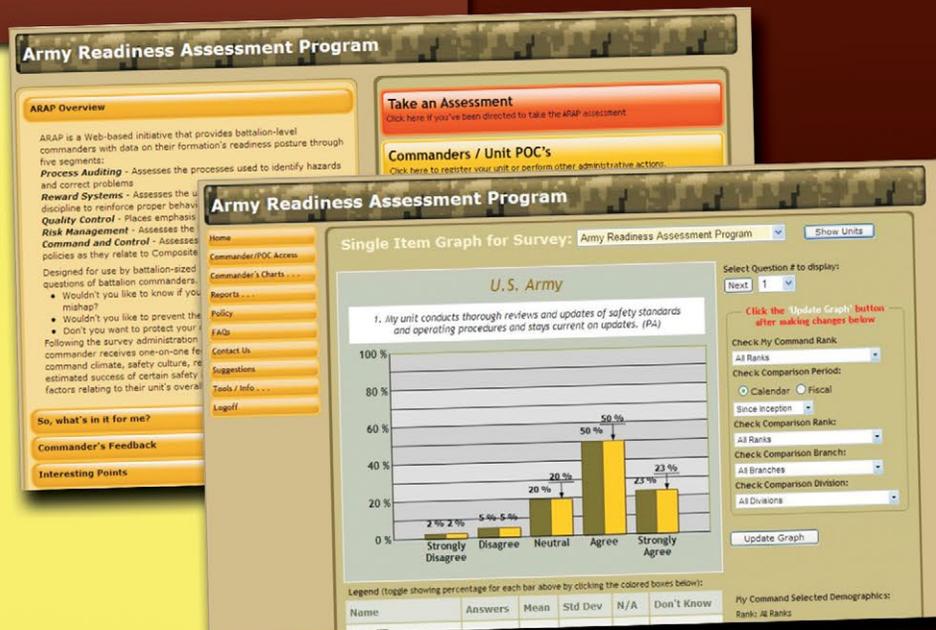
# ARAP

ARMY READINESS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

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

**Sign up for your assessment today!**

<https://unitready.army.mil>





# KNOWLEDGE

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**THIS MONTH** NOVEMBER 2015



## Grief and Guilt

SGT. 1ST CLASS LLOYD SMITH  
Headquarters and Headquarters Company  
Army Cyber Command  
Fort Belvoir, Virginia

*Author's note: What started off as a great day took a horrifying turn that will have a lifelong effect on my family. I hope sharing our story will help prevent others from ever having to deal with a similar heartbreaking accident.*

It was a Monday in late June and I had been lucky enough to get released from duty a little early. I decided to surprise my family by picking up some burgers and hotdogs and grilling out for dinner. Due to the distance of my commute, along with the traffic around Washington, I normally got home about 7 p.m. By then, dinner was usually over and my 2-year-old son, Liam, would be winding down before his bath and bed. Today, however, I would be home and grilling by 5 p.m.

It was a beautiful evening, so we ate dinner on the back deck. We rarely got to do this on a weekday and were enjoying every minute of it. I even got a chance to play with Liam in his sandbox and throw the ball with the dogs.

It was still daylight when we finished playing, so I figured I should take advantage of the nice weather and mow my backyard. As I brought out my riding lawn mower, Liam ran to me and asked for a ride. I'd always let him sit on

my leg and pretend to drive as I mowed. Sometimes, he'd even fall asleep on my lap before we'd finish.

(I know many of you are screaming, "No! You should never let a child ride on a lawnmower!" My wife and I, however, were both raised in areas where it was common for even a young child to ride along on a mower, tractor or all-terrain vehicle, so we didn't see anything wrong with it. We've since changed our stance.)

I picked up Liam, put him on my lap and started mowing my

SUBMIT AN ARTICLE



KNOWLEDGE HOME



CONTACT US





## “When I pushed the gas pedal a little more, I heard a sound that will haunt me for the rest of my life — my beautiful boy was screaming like nothing I had ever heard.”

half-acre backyard. While we were mowing, my wife grabbed the weed trimmer and started cleaning up the grass along the fence line. After two passes along the perimeter of the yard, Liam decided he wanted to get off the mower and go to

his mother, so I disengaged the blade and put him down. He ran over toward my wife and got in his sandbox to play. Seeing he was now safely out of the way, I engaged the blades and went back to cutting. While I was making another pass

along the perimeter, I watched Liam grab his bubble mower and start pushing it over some areas I'd mowed on the other side of the yard. We both continued mowing until my grass chute clogged.

I turned off the mower, cleared the clog, reconnected the chute to the bagger and started mowing again. I'd ridden about 10 feet when I looked back and noticed the grass was clumping as if the chute was still clogged. Knowing I had cleared the chute all the way to the bagger, I figured the cutting deck must have clumped grass stuck to it. I turned off the blades again and quickly raised and lowered the deck, almost slamming it on the ground, to break up the clumps. After I did this about five or six times, I engaged the blades again and put the mower in reverse.

(My mower has a safety feature that disengages the blades when it is in reverse. While this is a great feature, it can be bypassed. I'd always done this because it made cutting my grass a little easier.)

As I rode backward, the mower stopped moving. This had happened before when I'd run over some wet grass clumps, so I didn't think anything of it. When I pushed the gas pedal a little more, I heard a sound that will haunt me for the rest of my life — my beautiful boy was screaming like nothing I had ever heard. I looked back and saw his leg up to the knee was now under the cutting deck. I instantly disengaged the blades and got the mower off of him. My wife screamed as she ran to us. All the while, Liam was crying out, “Why daddy hurt Liam?”

My wife and I are both Soldiers with multiple deployments, so our hysteria lasted only seconds

### Did You Know?

**The American Academy of Pediatrics offers the following lawn mower injury prevention tips:**

- Only use a mower with a control that stops the mower blade from moving if the handle is let go. (Editor's note: Never override you mower's safety features.)
- Children should be at least 12 years of age before operating a push lawn mower and 16 to operate a driving lawn mower.
- Make sure sturdy shoes (not sandals or sneakers) are worn while mowing.
- Prevent injuries from flying objects, such as stones or toys, by picking up objects from the lawn before mowing begins. Have anyone who uses a mower, or is in the vicinity, wear polycarbonate protective eyewear at all times.
- Do not pull the mower backward or mow in reverse unless absolutely necessary; carefully look for children behind

you when you mow in reverse.

- Always turn off the mower and wait for the blades to stop completely before removing the grass catcher, unclogging the discharge chute, inspecting or repairing lawn mower equipment or crossing gravel paths, roads or other areas.
- Use a stick or broom handle (not your hands or feet) to remove debris in lawn mowers.
- Do not allow children to ride as passengers on riding mowers and keep them out of the yard while mowing.
- Drive up and down slopes, not across, to prevent a mower rollover.
- Keep lawn mowers in good working order. When using a lawn mower for the first time in a season, have it serviced to ensure it is working correctly.



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before we quickly transitioned to triage mode. We wrapped up Liam and moved him to an area that would be more easily accessible for paramedics. We then called 911 and tried to keep him calm. I'd like to say I was in complete control, but when the paramedics arrived, I broke down. My wife rode in the ambulance with Liam while I waited at home to hear which hospital Life Flight would transport him.

Over the next two weeks, Liam underwent six surgeries before we were faced with the unthinkable decision: have doctors attempt to reconstruct his severely damaged foot or amputate it at the ankle. The mower had severed tendons and broken both bones in his lower leg. Worse, he'd lost his heel, two toes and skin from his calf. By the grace of God, Liam's pediatric orthopedic surgeon was one of the best in the country. We told him we wanted to do whatever would be best for his quality of life. In the end, we decided the best option was to amputate.

As I write this, nine weeks have passed since that terrible day. While Liam is physically healing, his psychological well-being is coming along a little more slowly. We are in the process of having him fitted with a prosthesis, but are still dealing with things no parent should have to endure. How do you even begin to explain to a 2-year-old why this accident happened? We welcomed our second child just last month and are preparing to one day answer her questions about why her brother doesn't have two feet or why he can take off one of his but she can't. I never could have imagined we'd one day be dealing with something this awful.

I'm sure it's no surprise I'm still dealing with the guilt and grief that resulted from this accident. One thing I knew I had to do, though, was share my story with others. I don't want another parent to ever have to experience what we have. I bet most of you don't even think about lawn mower accidents and how often they occur. I can tell

**Family Strong**

**Family engagement kit**

<https://safety.army.mil>

Army Safe is Army Strong and that starts with a Soldier's Family. Have the information to help you and your Family stay SAFE.

you they happen more frequently than you would imagine. The American Academy of Pediatrics estimates about 17,000 children annually require emergency room care due to lawn mower accidents. Thousands of adults are also injured.

### Lessons learned

Over the past couple of months, I have continually replayed the events of that day in mind, wishing I had done things differently. First, I would have insisted Liam stay inside the house with my wife while I cut the grass. Had he

been inside, there's no way this accident could have occurred.

Second, I shouldn't have overridden my mower's safety features. Manufacturers put these safeguards on equipment to help prevent accidents. Had I not bypassed the feature that disengages the blade when the mower is in reverse, Liam wouldn't have been injured as badly, if at all.

Finally, I should have held off cutting the grass until a time I didn't feel so rushed. It had rained the previous few weekends, which had kept me from doing yard work. As a result, our grass had gotten really high. More rain was forecast for later in the week, so I wanted to get it cut while I still could. We were also scheduled to go out of town for the July Fourth weekend, which meant if I didn't cut it before we left, it would be at least another eight to 10 days before I got another chance.

It's difficult to say what else I could or should have done differently without getting into the self-blame game. I've already done that, and still do to an extent. I have flashbacks about the accident and wake up in a cold sweat every night. While writing this article was hard for me, I decided burying my head in the sand and avoiding talking about it was not the answer. Writing this was as much therapeutic for me as I hope it will be educational for all who read it.

Since the accident, Liam and I have grown extremely close. I'm no longer just the guy that is home for nights and weekends. I'm his rock — the person he looks to for love and support. He knows I would never intentionally hurt him and I hope one day he'll understand how very sorry I am for what happened that day. ■

# HERE IT COMES



**Don't wait for the storm to come. Now is the time to get your vehicle ready.**

- Emergency kit
- Blanket
- Flashlight
- Heat source



ROUTE

# 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>



## Keep going in the snow

RETIRED SGT. 1ST CLASS CRAIG A. DAILEY  
AMCOM, IMMC, UAS  
Redstone Arsenal, Alabama

**D**riving is a challenging task. Traffic, road construction, rain, kids making noise, the radio and ringing cellphones can all be very distracting. Couple that with slick wintry roads, black ice, snow and sleet and you've added a whole new element to driving. Toss in those four-wheel-drive owners who think they can still go 60 mph on these roads and the risks rise considerably. While you can't control the weather or other drivers, you can apply risk management to reduce your driving risks.

First, identify the hazards. Among those are things such as black ice, snow accumulation and other traffic, including snowplows and vehicles spreading sand or salt. Checking your local weather forecast and road conditions can help keep you on top of these hazards.

Second, assess the hazards. Examine each one in terms of its probability and severity should an accident happen. Consider historical lessons learned, experience levels and judgment. If you've had an accident driving on icy roads, you know the possible consequences. Ask yourself, "Is this trip necessary?"

The third and fourth steps — developing controls and making risk decisions, and implementing controls — can begin well before the first snow falls. One important part is winterizing your vehicle. Here's what you can do:

### Windshield wipers

One of the most overlooked parts



of vehicle maintenance is replacing the windshield wiper blades. Automobile experts recommend these be changed annually because torn, cracked and dry-rotted blades can fail to keep your windshield clear when driving through rain, sleet or snow. Also, fill your windshield washer reservoir with a fluid designed for the cold temperatures where you'll be driving. If needed, you can supplement your washer fluid with concentrates designed to keep your windows clear at extremely low temperatures. Keep an extra bottle of fluid in your vehicle so you won't run out in the middle of a trip.

### Battery

Check your battery and charging system. Overlooked batteries can lose power when temperatures drop, making it hard to start your vehicle.

### Tires

Tires are also a vital part of safe winter driving. Maintaining the best possible traction with the roadway is crucial in determining how well your vehicle rides, turns and stops. Make sure your tires have plenty of good, deep tread and are properly inflated. Remember, your tire pressure drops about 1 psi for every 9 F drop in

temperature. While you're at it, check your spare tire for proper inflation. While checking your spare, locate your jack and the other equipment you'll need for changing tires.

### Radiator

Check your radiator to make sure it has the proper amount of coolant and has been properly serviced. It is important to have the radiator flushed and the coolant changed periodically. Your owner's manual will tell you when that needs to be done. Many antifreeze products are pre-mixed; if yours isn't, a 50-50 mix of coolant to water is normally appropriate. When in doubt, check your owner's manual.

### Fuel

Watch your fuel level, keeping your tank at least half full to reduce moisture buildup inside the fuel tank. Knowing you have enough fuel can give you peace of mind when stuck in traffic. Remember, as long as you have fuel, a properly maintained engine can idle indefinitely, keeping you warm inside your vehicle. Make sure you keep a window open slightly for proper ventilation.

### In case of emergency

There are some useful items I recommend you keep in your trunk,



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including a blanket or two, snow shovel, some cat litter or sand for traction, fire extinguisher, an old pair of boots, jumper cables, proper-fitting tire chains, flares and a first aid kit. And, of course, you'll need a snow brush and ice scraper to clear off your windows, mirrors, headlights and brake lights. This will help you to better see and be seen by others. Warming up your car before driving is also a good idea. This allows your oil and coolant to reach operating temperature and your heater to warm up and clear your windows.

### On the road

Everyone knows hurrying increases the risk of an accident, so allow yourself extra time to get to your destination. When driving in snowy conditions, allow extra stopping distance when approaching intersections. Begin braking early just in case you begin sliding on the snow or ice. On primary and secondary roads, increase your following distance to allow ample stopping time in poor weather.

You can use your vehicle's transmission to help maintain control. By downshifting a manual or automatic transmission, you can use your engine's braking power to help slow you. Some newer automatic transmissions offer a second gate for the shift lever that allows you to upshift or downshift through the gears as desired.

Don't panic if you go into a skid. If your vehicle has an antilock braking system, brake firmly and steer in the direction you want to go. If you don't have ABS, steer into the skid and avoid braking. A good tip to remember

is to always look in the direction where you want your car to go.

Drive with low-beam headlights and, if possible, stay in the right-hand lane. Should you become stranded or stuck in snowy conditions, don't panic. If blizzard conditions make it hard to see or you're unable to shovel out of the snow, remain in your vehicle. Stay as warm as possible and limit your exposure to the wintry conditions.

Turn on your flashers or set up flares. Run the car in 10-minute intervals to provide heat while conserving fuel. Make sure your tailpipe is free of snow and open a window slightly on the downwind side of your vehicle to prevent the buildup of carbon monoxide. Use your blanket to help stay warm, but avoid falling asleep or staying in the same position for too long. Also, monitor yourself and other passengers for frostbite and hypothermia.

### One last thing

The final step of risk management is to evaluate how well your control measures worked. Did you arrive at your destination without an accident? If you did have problems, ask yourself what you could have done differently and make that a part of your controls in the future.

Taking your time, maintaining good situational awareness and planning for the possible hazards on the road will greatly improve your chances of arriving safely at your destination this winter. And by the way, keep an eye out for those overconfident drivers who flew by you earlier. Chances are you'll see them again a few miles up the road — in the ditch. ■

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## Merge Right

A few years ago, my family and I drove from North Carolina to Florida to visit my in-laws for the holidays. As we made the roughly 600-mile, 10-hour trip, I was reminded how important it is that people share the road courteously and responsibly. One place where that is particularly important is when merging with highway traffic. Even though we do it every day, merging into traffic is a feat that even seasoned drivers sometimes have a hard time accomplishing safely.

### Yielding

One of the definitions for “yield” in Webster’s Dictionary is “to give or render as fitting, rightfully owed, or required.” We Americans, however, can be greedy when it comes to yielding on the road. We must remember that yielding is important to the safety of drivers already on the road and those trying to merge.

Merging drivers are responsible to yield to highway traffic and to signal their intentions early enough

**“Check your ego; you’ll get over being ticked a lot faster than you’ll get over being ticketed.”**

for other drivers to properly plan and react. However, it’s not just merging drivers who need to yield. Although drivers on the road have right-of-way, they should be willing to yield, as needed, to allow space for merging drivers to safely enter

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the flow of traffic. Matching speeds, as described below, can help make that process easier, safer and less aggravating for both drivers.

### Matching speeds

Matching speeds is important to reduce the difference in speed between drivers on the road and those attempting to merge. To do that, merging drivers need to use the onramp and, if available, merging lane to accelerate to just below the traffic speed. Highway drivers should slow down slightly to provide

merging drivers room to enter the road and reach highway speed.

Another option for drivers on the road is, when possible, to signal and change lanes to their left. This frees the right-hand lane for merging traffic to enter safely.

It is important to know the state’s rules about driving in the left lane so you don’t camp there if it is not legal. You should reenter the right lane when it is safe to do so.

### One-to-one merging

Another alternative is one-to-one merging, which alternates a vehicle on the road with a merging vehicle. Drivers on the road and merging drivers effectively alternate taking their turn in the right lane, allowing them to share the road in a predictable, equitable fashion. To make this work safely, drivers on the road should keep, at a minimum, a two-second following interval behind the vehicle ahead. This leaves room for merging drivers to enter the roadway and helps avoid tailgating — a dangerous situation that can lead to road rage.

### All the rage

Speaking of anger on the road, there’s a reason many police officers park near merging lanes and watch the traffic; such places are common



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locations for road rage. A vehicle gets cut off or someone speeds, blocking a driver from merging and forcing them to stop in the merging lane, and the blood starts boiling. Such incidents can lead to road rage as drivers seek to get even with those who have offended them. Because of increased traffic congestion and driver distraction as motorists try to move to the proper lane, it's especially important to yield without letting tempers flare. Acting out road rage is against the law and can land a driver in jail, in addition to paying stiff fines and penalties.

### Don't pick a fight

If you're on the highway and approaching an onramp ahead, remember the advice about matching speeds. Slow down and leave room for the merging vehicle to enter the road ahead of you. Remember to use the two-second following rule on the road to leave a safe interval. Understand it's not worth your life or someone else's to save those two seconds. Speeding up to block someone from merging can earn you a ticket for tailgating or aggressive driving. Check your ego; you'll get over being ticked a lot faster than you'll get over being ticketed.

### Chilling out

Merging on roads covered with snow or ice requires extra care if you want to avoid a collision or winding up in a

ditch. If you're on the highway, it's best to signal and move to the lane on your left. This allows merging drivers the extra room they need to slowly accelerate on the onramp, get onto the highway and gradually speed up to match the traffic flow. The last thing you want yourself or anyone else to have to do is suddenly brake on a slick road.

### The squeeze play

Not all merging situations involve traffic entering a highway. Sometimes, road construction or accidents force drivers to merge into a single lane. Planned lane closures, such as for road construction, are normally well marked in advance, alerting drivers to what lies ahead. Temporary lane closures, such as those caused by accidents, require drivers be alert to the road situation ahead. In both cases, there will be some drivers who will stay in the lane being closed until the last second and then attempt to merge. While this cutting in line often angers other drivers, trying to block them could lead to serious consequences, such as driver confrontations or multiple-car crashes.

### Bottom line

While it's easy to feel we own the stretch of road we are on, it's a lot wiser to be willing to share it with others. After all, which would you rather be behind on the road — a merging driver or a tow truck? ■



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## Over Water, Out Of Power CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 3 MATTHEW HOPPER

**O**ver the last 18 years, there have been many events I've written about. Most would probably be good reads, but one in particular sticks out — the infamous dual-engine rollback in a UH-60A over ALANA intersection just south of the Honolulu VOR.

The flight started routinely with an instrument flight rule departure from Bradshaw Army Airfield on the big island of Hawaii. We were en route to Wheeler AAF on Oahu. I was the pilot in command of the flight, and my pilot that day was another experienced PC in the company. I had about 2,000 hours of flight time, and the PI was somewhere close to 1,000 hours. Needless to say, it was a nice change from doing readiness level progressions or evaluations.

Shortly after takeoff we settled in for a nice, two-hour flight back to Oahu in mostly visual meteorological conditions. I would have preferred to be operating under visual flight rules at 500 feet back to Oahu to take in the sights, but it was against brigade policy to fly single-ship VFR inter-island. Prior to this incident, I really did not understand the point of that rule. It soon became very clear.

The first hour and half of the flight was uneventful. We had been at 10,000 feet and kept getting altitude step-downs from approach control. We eventually ended up at 6,000 feet and two to three miles from ALANA intersection, which is about 13 miles south of the Honolulu VOR and 12 miles from the closest piece of land. As we approached ALANA, I started my right turn inbound to the VOR. That's when we heard



something every pilot hates to hear — a change in engine noise.

Everything seemed like it was in slow motion. I was the pilot on the controls and when I heard the engines spooling down, I looked at the pilot's display unit and saw both engines and the rotor RPM dropping. At first I thought we had oscillations, which I've seen before; but when all three came down below 95 percent, I announced decreasing RPMs and lowered the collective slightly and slammed the increase/decrease switch full forward. I would later find out the entire crew thought I was messing around and introducing an emergency procedure.

As soon as the low rotor horn sounded, they quickly realized this was for real. I announced autorotation and lowered the collective completely. I then made a sharp right turn to avoid going in the next set of clouds at our 12 o'clock. At this point we were about five to 10 seconds into the emergency. As I entered the auto and started my right turn, I could see Jason,

the PI, was looking at the central display unit and caution advisory, trying to figure out what had just happened. I asked him, "Jason, which is the low engine?" He responded with, "Matt, they are both low".

I then thought to myself, "What would cause both engines to go low but not shut down? Jason must be looking at this wrong." All the while, I was trying to establish a steady state for the autorotation. At this point I had slowed the aircraft from 110 knots to 85 knots or so and started to lower the nose and turn toward a large ship inbound to Oahu. I had no intentions of landing on the ship, and, yes, I've been asked why I turned toward it. I just wanted to be close to something if it turned out we had to swim that day.

In the meantime, while I was getting us established into an autorotation, Jason was still troubleshooting the EP. The only thing we knew for sure was that we were dealing with something neither of us had ever seen. I then asked Jason again, "Which is the low engine?" He



responded with, "Matt, I told you, they are both low." Of course, it was in a much more forceful and slightly annoyed voice the second time. I then took a look inside for a half a second and, sure enough, both engines were low. My eyes were immediately drawn to the NG. They were both indicating about 65 percent, which, for a Black Hawk means the engines had rolled back to idle.

I can't remember exactly where the ENG RPM ended up, but we maintained the rotor at approximately 102-103 percent. I then looked outside and said to Jason, "That makes no sense at all." To which he said, "I agree," with a few choice words in the middle.

He then announced he was taking No. 2 to lockout. I replied, "Roger, No. 2 to lockout." But as soon as he put his hand on the engine power control lever, the engines started increasing RPM. Now, mind you, this had nothing to do with moving a control lever. Jason had merely placed his hand on it and not moved a thing.

As soon as the engines started their upward climb, I said, "Hold on. Leave it alone for a second." At this point I know there will be plenty of you second guessing this decision, but put yourself in my shoes for a minute. I had never seen two engines decrease RPM before and now they were coming back to life. I did not want to do anything that may aggravate the situation. Plus, we still had 4,000 feet or so to figure this out before we were swimming.

Jason then stopped and held his hand on the PCL but did not take it to lockout. As soon as the engines got up around 95 percent, which felt like an hour, I started to slowly increase the collective. You could feel the rotor starting to take the load and we heard

the whine of the engines as they started to couple with the rotor again.

The engines and rotor met up close to 98 percent before both engines started to head south again. This time, they only went down to 90 percent and immediately started their climb back up to 100 percent. To me this looked much more familiar. I told Jason, "Hey, it looks like they are oscillating. I'm going to start pulling collective and we'll see what happens. If the engines

continue to Wheeler AAF, but given what we had and the lack of really knowing what we were dealing with, Jason and I thought it best to get this thing on the ground ASAP.

Jason's hand never left the No. 2 engine power control lever during his conversation with approach and his eyes never left the pilot's display unit. We talked about it the whole way in. We know the EP for oscillations, but because this EP did not come on as normal oscillations,

**"Previously, Jason made the mayday call after the entry into the autorotation, but we did not have time up until this point to give them any of the details they wanted so badly."**

go below 95 percent this time, get No. 2 to lockout." He said OK. As the engines and rotor coupled again, all three started to oscillate from about 95 percent up to 102 percent. We then leveled out somewhere in between 2,000 and 3,000 feet.

During this process, HCF approach had been screaming on the radio. Previously, Jason made the mayday call after the entry into the autorotation, but we did not have time up until this point to give them any of the details they wanted so badly. Jason got on the radio and explained the situation and, after a lot of back and forth, finally told them we were landing on 4R at Honolulu. They were not happy about that at all. They wanted us to

we did not want to compound the situation unless we were no-kidding getting ready to go into the water.

The rest of the flight, which lasted less than 10 minutes, was, for the most part, uneventful, barring the pucker factor every time the oscillations went close to 95 percent. We landed at Honolulu and started making our calls. The first one was to the commander and then on down the list. After everyone was notified and the ball was rolling on aircraft and crew recovery, we had some time to take in what just happened.

We got the crew together and started talking. The biggest takeaway — or surprise, if you will — was there was never any overreaction. Our crew chief, Andrew, kind of chuckled



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because he said that it sounded like Jason and I were just having a conversation without much emotion involved. I then chuckled a little bit because I was really happy I still had clean pants. At that point, we felt we all performed as a crew in exactly the manner we were trained. Take your time to identify the emergency procedure and don't compound an already bad situation. We had time; we started this EP at 6,000 feet and 110 knots. Our initial reaction was to take one engine to lockout, but, not knowing exactly what we were dealing with, who's to say that would not have made the situation worse.

The next few weeks were excruciatingly painful with the troubleshooting that was going on from some of our peers and superiors. If I remember correctly, the battalion commander's first question to the BAMO was, "What did they do wrong?" I found that comment humorous to say the least. How quickly we in aviation are to judge things we don't understand. I was also asked numerous times why I did not jettison the doors, to which I replied, "Where do you think the doors are going to go in an autorotation?" Some of you may find that question crazy, but I can honestly say that's the most common question I received after all of this went down.

Anyway, there were many, many people who said and still say that a dual-engine rollback in a Black Hawk is impossible. To them I say read the Flightfax article from May 1999 and get back to me. To everyone else, I say this: Dual-engine rollback happens. Do a quick Google search and you can read all about it. I was told there was not one specific cause. However, they did find a leak in the

anti-ice start bleed valve that caused heat damage to one of the ECUs.

They also found a broken or bad wire that came from or went to an engine speed potentiometer. Just to set the record straight here, I am not a maintenance test pilot, but it was explained to me like this: One engine went low because of an overheated ECU and, based on the faulty potentiometer, the other engine went with it. When the ECU cooled down, they came back. That was a good enough explanation for me.

I know all the representatives from the appropriate companies were involved and eventually figured it out, or at least got it back together to the point where they said it would not happen again. I have no idea if our dual-engine rollback was caused by the same malfunction that caused all of the rollbacks in 90s, but I can assure you, the engines rolled back. Had we been at 500 feet and not 6,000 feet, there is a pretty good chance we would have been swimming back to Oahu.

Of course, now that we know dual-engine rollback exists, I don't think it would take me long to diagnose and take action. If engine power control levers are set to fly and both engine NGs are low, I'm taking one to lockout, no questions asked.

What I'm trying to share is the fact that nothing is set in stone. Just because it's not in Chapter 9 of your operator's manual does not mean it can't happen or does not exist. Of course the -10 does address engine RPM being low and checking the increase/decrease switch, which we did, but it had zero effect. I had never heard of dual-engine rollback until the day I had to deal with it in a real-world incident. After I described what I had seen, I must have heard 10 stories about people familiar with it. That's also when I was made aware of the Flightfax article from 1999.

After the smoke settled a bit, Jason posted the information on Hawkdriver.com, trying to get some information about rollback. A few folks chimed in with actual accounts. Still, to this day, I have yet to see anything or hear anything other than the following statement: "It can't happen." To that, I politely respond, "You're wrong!" ■

## If it happens ...





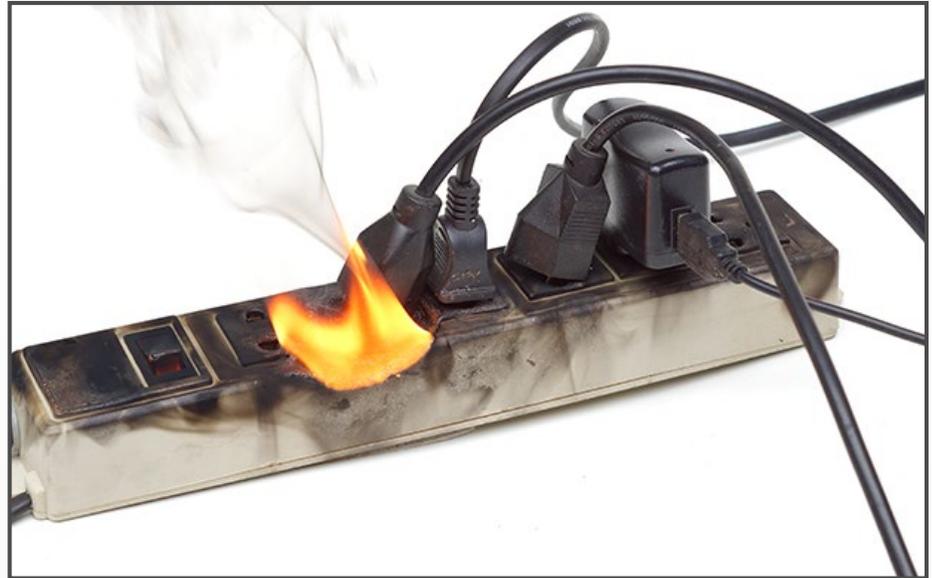
## Playing with Fire COMPILED BY THE KNOWLEDGE STAFF

**S**oldiers remain indoors much more during the cold winter months than in the spring and summer, when the weather is sunny and pleasant. In some cases, this means many appliances and electronic devices will remain plugged in and running for longer periods of time, which can increase the risk of an accidental fire.

Electrical hazards are the most common fire risk Soldiers face and can result from the improper use of extension cords, appliances, daisy chained power strips, overloaded outlets and light fixtures. To help reduce electrical fire hazards, inspect the rubber or plastic insulation wrapped around extension cords. If this protective wrap is cracked, frayed or damaged in any way, replace it immediately.

Keep in mind extension cords are intended to be temporary and should be unplugged after every use. Never consider an extension cord as part of an appliance's factory-supplied power cord. Also, look at the male and female ends of the cord. Stamped on one or both ends should be the Underwriters Laboratories "UL" symbol, which is considered the safety seal of approval. Electronic goods without this stamp or sticker should not be trusted.

Another common mistake that creates a fire hazard is daisy chaining power strips (plugging one power strip into another). This is often done in a misguided attempt to operate multiple appliances off one outlet. This technique causes a reduction in the amperes flowing into individual appliances,



which results in overheating and can lead to a fire. One outlet is manufactured to supply power to one power strip. Operating two or more power strips off a single outlet creates an unacceptable hazard.

Light fixtures such as lamps and track lighting can also create a fire hazard. Lights should never be placed where they touch curtains or drapes. In addition, never cover the top of a lampshade, as heat from the bulb must be allowed to ventilate. If the bulb cannot ventilate, the heat will intensify and perhaps cause a fire. It's also a good idea to keep appliances clean. Remember to never cover an appliance's ventilation ducts, as lack of ventilation causes heat and can result in a fire.

Although electrical hazards may dominate this list, they're not the only threat. As for smoking hazards, do not empty ashtrays or cans into the trash without first dousing the hot ashes with water.

More importantly, remember to never smoke within 50 feet of any fuel point or tanker truck. Also remember candles and gas grills are fire hazards. Burn barrels must be kept a safe distance from all buildings and decking, and a fire should never be left unattended.

Some final thoughts on housekeeping practices: Never cover emergency light fixtures with clothes, linens or anything else. Also, never block exits with furniture and do not obstruct access to breaker boxes either inside or outside of billeting structures. If you have any questions or concerns about fire safety, direct them to your safety officer or the fire department. Remember, fire hazards have countermeasures. Employ them! ■



## Stranded in the Tundra

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Garrison Safety  
Fort Wainwright, Alaska

**J**im — that's not his real name, but we'll use it for easy reference — had big plans for his fall moose hunt. Jim, who was stationed at Fort Wainwright, Alaska, had contracted a guide to take him hunting. Looking to make the most of their time, the pair decided to ride their all-terrain vehicles to the jump-off point for the hunt, leave them there and then return in a light plane from a nearby airstrip. When it was time for the hunt, the pair planned to fly back out to the strip and pick up their ATVs and gear.

The day came for Jim and his guide to meet and ride their ATVs to the drop off point. Jim was confident about the ride; he'd already spent a lot of time camping and hunting in the back country. This was a piece of cake — or so he figured — so he didn't bother letting anyone else know where he was going, what trail he was using or when he was due back.

As the pair rode their ATVs down the trail, Jim got ahead of his guide. Instead of waiting for him to catch up, he kept pushing on, thinking he could find his own way to the drop-off point. After going some distance, Jim lost the trail but thought he could still make it by taking off across the tundra and heading toward Iowa Ridge. However, he didn't have a map, compass or his portable GPS equipment with him. Beyond that, he was familiar with the terrain he was now in.

As he rode, Jim's heavily loaded ATV began to overheat, ultimately shorting out the electrical system.



Fortunately for Jim, he was able to pull start the engine once it cooled down. But he was now lost and, as night fell, he decided to camp next to his machine, fighting off the chilly temperatures by staying warm in his sleeping bag.

The next day, Jim headed out again across the tundra. As he rode

that dropped into the 40s as Jim hunkered down beneath the tarp. To make matters worse, he was almost out of gas. Even if he could get the machine back onto its wheels and running, he didn't have enough gas to get to somewhere he'd be safe. The only good news was that Jim had his cellphone and could keep

**“First, don't get cocky because you've done something in the past and assume you can take shortcuts.”**

through the rugged terrain, the ATV tipped onto its side. Try as he might, Jim could not get it back onto its wheels. Stranded, he spent his second night in the wilderness, camped out beneath a tarp next to his machine. The next day brought rain, wind and temperatures

his family apprised of the situation.

The next day, his family called the Alaska State Troopers and tell them Jim was stranded and provided a general idea of where he was. The troopers launched a helicopter and, after a couple of hours, found Jim. Unable to land because of the



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rugged terrain, the troopers contacted medical evacuation personnel at Fort Wainwright, who successfully got to Jim. They were able to rescue him and bring him back home, but his ATV had to be left where it was, stranded in the tundra. This was not exactly the way Jim had envisioned things going.

As bad as things went, Jim was lucky. Things could have turned out far worse than just being in hot water with his family for screwing up his back-country trip. With the benefit of hindsight, it's easy to see his trip was an accident waiting to happen. Instead of applying risk management to plan for any potential problems, he assumed too much of his own skills. He substituted poor prior planning for risk management and got unpleasant results.

Let's take a minute to use a little risk management to see how an ATV trip into the back country could have been better planned.

First, don't get cocky because you've done something in the past and assume you can take shortcuts. You don't know everything that could happen. Because of that, check your survival equipment to ensure you're carrying everything you'd need should you become lost or stranded. No one plans on getting lost or stranded, but once you are, you'll have to survive on what you brought with you.

Second, always tell someone responsible where you're going and leave a detailed map with them. Establish certain checkpoints along your route and, when you reach them, contact that responsible person. That way, should something happen, it will be a lot easier for searchers to find you.

Third, never travel alone in the back country. Even if your guide is moving slower than you want to, stay with them. They know where they're going; you may only think you know. This is especially true when traveling through unfamiliar terrain. Also, common sense dictates taking a map, compass and, if you have one, GPS so you can keep track of your position.

Remember, the back country can be very unforgiving of mistakes, and man is not the top of the food chain. Before you go out, make sure you've got a good plan to come back. ■

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## Expect the Unexpected CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 3 NICHOLAS C. FELIX

It was the beginning of another routine daytime mission. Get some gas and bullets and go fly around for four hours. I was the pilot in command of the lead OH-58D that day. Being fairly new at the PC thing, I preferred to do things a bit slowly. All (some) factors considered, I chose to depart with a right quartering headwind. We were set-right-stack-left and ready to roll, but, as expected, a Black Hawk at my 5 o'clock exercised its liberty and took off from its position at the fuel point.

Operating an OH-58D on an airfield is a little like driving a motorcycle in traffic. You have to understand the other operators won't see you and are always trying to kill you. So, I knew this. Instead of taking off immediately, I set down to let the Black Hawk



As the Black Hawk climbed away, I braced for the rotor wash. A little breeze went by, so, figuring the threat had passed, I pulled some pitch. Keeping an eye on the Black Hawk, it turned again, nearly reversing course. No worries; our flight paths were well separated, so I continued. Just as

airborne. Still, this was not a good situation. I pegged the cyclic into my right leg, but the world was sideways and my trail aircraft was getting closer, fast. The left-seater was braced for the crash.

I've been blown around by Black Hawks and Chinooks, and when you run out of cyclic there is one other control to which you can turn. So, like I'd done before, when the cyclic wasn't quite cutting it, I pulled a bunch of collective. That worked quite well. We rolled back to the right real fast, which was just fine with me. The swinging soon stopped, but the shaking continued. That was a close call! What started as a routine day turned into anything but, and it proved to me once again that when you're flying a helicopter, always be ready for the unexpected. ■

**“I pegged the cyclic into my right leg, but the world was sideways and my trail aircraft was getting closer, fast.”**

take off. It did the usual vertical takeoff with a pedal turn into the wind. No big deal. I called tower and requested takeoff clearance while I watched the Black Hawk fly up, up and away to the right. Now cleared for takeoff with trail set to my left, it was time to go.

the skids got light, the full brunt of the Black Hawk's rotor wash hit on my right side, along with the right quartering head wind. There was a pivot point — the left skid — and a rolling motion. But, luckily, at some point prior to the critical angle, we became

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



# Driver's Training Toolbox

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





## Face First in the Snow

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Picatinny Arsenal, New Jersey

**T**here was a huge thud and then everything went black. When I woke up, I was lying face down in the snow in a rapidly spreading pool of blood. I must have blacked out again because the next thing I remember I was lying on my back on a stretcher, staring at the sky with a snowmobile pulling me down the mountain. As I passed my friends, I saw their concerned expressions. That scared me. I knew I was hurt, but wasn't sure how badly. Before long, I was on my way to an emergency room. After the doctors examined me, I found out I'd broken my nose. That wasn't the way I'd expected my day on the slopes to end.

Earlier that day, I'd been downhill skiing with friends on a mountain I was very familiar with in northeastern Pennsylvania. I grew up in the Northeast and had plenty



cool to stay on the bunny slope and had gotten onto the more advanced slope, making it even more crowded and dangerous.

Not only did the beginners lack the skills for the advanced slope, many were ignorant of the Skier's Code of Responsibility (see box at end of this article). One of the code's

disaster. However, not everyone on a ski slope uses common sense.

As I headed down the slope, I suddenly found a snowboarder heading up the slope right in front of me. Normally, I'd be able to maneuver and avoid a collision, but the slope was so crowded I couldn't turn without hitting somebody. Unable to avoid him, I hit the snowboarder head-on, fell over him and then went face first onto the ground.

While he escaped injury from the collision, I wasn't quite so lucky. My impact with the ground left me with a deviated septum. You might say my nose is permanently out of joint. Along with acquiring my crooked nasal passages, I learned some lessons that day I often pass along to new skiers and snowboarders:

- If it's your first time on skis, take lessons. It's better to learn from a professional rather than follow your friends down the mountain.
- Don't ski on a trail that is above your level. Not only can

**“Many of them felt they were too cool to stay on the bunny slope and had gotten onto the more advanced slope, making it even more crowded and dangerous.”**

of experience skiing on icy, packed powder. The slope I was on wasn't that difficult, but it was extremely crowded that day. Unfortunately for me, there were a lot of first-time skiers and snowboarders around. Many of them felt they were too

basic rules is you don't enter the slope without first looking uphill and yielding to people already moving downhill. Common sense should tell you skiers coming downhill have a lot of speed and momentum and getting in their way is a recipe for



# KNOWLEDGE

OFFICIAL SAFETY MAGAZINE OF THE U.S. ARMY

## Skier's Code of Responsibility

Skiing can be enjoyed in many ways. At ski areas you may see people using alpine, snowboard, Telemark, cross-country and other specialized ski equipment, including that used by disabled or other skiers. Regardless how you decide to enjoy the slopes, always show courtesy to others and be aware there are elements of risk in skiing that common sense and personal awareness can help reduce. Observe the rules listed below and share with other skiers, especially those who are new or inexperienced skiers.

1. Always stay in control, and be able to stop or avoid other people or objects.
2. People ahead of you have the right of way. It is your responsibility to avoid them.
3. You must not stop where you obstruct a trail, or are not visible from above.
4. Whenever starting downhill or merging into a trail, look uphill and yield to others.
5. Always use devices to help prevent runaway equipment.
6. Observe all posted signs and warnings. Keep off closed trails and out of closed areas.
7. Prior to using any lift, you must have the knowledge and ability to load, ride and unload safely.

you hurt yourself, you can hurt others around you.

- Make sure you have the proper equipment and it is adjusted and fits properly. When taking children skiing, ensure they wear their helmets. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, children between the ages of 5 and 14 are the most likely skiers to suffer head injuries.

- Don't start drinking until after you're done skiing. I've seen too many drunk skiers slam into trees.

- If you're venturing onto

to the steeper slopes or off the trail, don't go alone. Although I passed out after the accident, my friends were there to summon the ski patrol to help me.

- Stay in control while you are skiing or boarding. Don't leave the bunny slope until you have mastered it and have the skills to try something more challenging. Practice being safe so you and your fellow skiers and snowboard bums can enjoy the slopes for years to come. ■

## Got a story to tell? We'd love to hear it!



Knowledge is looking for contributors in the field to provide us with ground, aviation, driving and off-duty safety articles. You say you've never written an article for publication? Don't worry — our editorial staff is here to help. Just write about what you know and they'll take care of the rest. By sharing your story, you might just save someone's life or an expensive piece of equipment.

Send your submissions to [safe.knowledge@conus.army.mil](mailto:safe.knowledge@conus.army.mil). Don't forget to include your rank, name, unit, address and office phone number so we can get in touch with you. If you have any photos that accompany your article, please send those as well.

# 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?

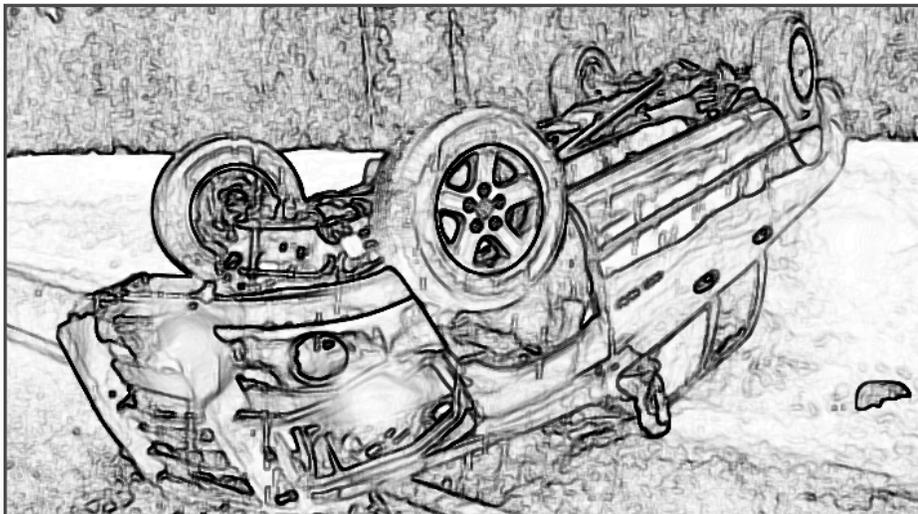


<https://safety.army.mil>



## Pushing My Luck

SCOTT TUFTS  
Naval Support Activity  
Orlando, Florida



**H**anging upside down in my driver seat, restrained by my seat belt, I was thinking, “How did I get here? What did I do to get myself in this situation?” All I could see through my windshield was the snow on the ground. Then I suddenly heard knocking on my window and my buddy asking, “Scott, are you OK?”

So how did I end up on the roof of my Ford Explorer on the side of Interstate 70 in Kansas? Let me go back about 11 hours to 10 a.m. the previous day. It was a Friday in February and my buddy, Tom, and I had just graduated from the Battalion Motor Officer Course at Fort Knox, Kentucky. As soon as the graduation was over, we changed clothes, checked out of our hotel and hit the road. We needed to get back to our unit at Fort Carson, Colorado, by Monday morning. Although it was a 1,200-mile drive, Tom

and I figured we could make it by Saturday morning if we drove through the night. We had our own vehicles, so we decided to just follow each other.

Initially, the trip went without any incidents. However, as we passed Kansas City, Kansas, on I-70 we ran into a blizzard. It caught us by surprise because neither of us had checked the weather conditions for our route before we left. I was in the lead, following an 18-wheeler. The blowing snow had cut my visibility to less than 20 feet and I could barely see the back of the tractor-trailer.

Sunset was at about 6 p.m. Shortly afterward, we started seeing cars pulling off the side of the highway — their drivers stopping because of the poor visibility. However, this did not deter us. All we were concerned about was getting home as fast as we could.

The snow plows were working hard, their blades piling up large mounds of powder along the sides of the highway. Eventually, we began encountering black ice on the road. We watched as some of the cars ahead of us fishtailed, went off the highway and plowed into the snow-piled embankments. One car in particular, driven by an elderly gentleman, slid into the grass median. Being good Samaritans, we pulled over to push his car back onto the road so he could get going again.

Ironically, although I’d been

**“All we were concerned about was getting home as fast as we could.”**

pushing my luck all day, it wasn’t until after we’d rendered assistance that it changed for the worse. Once the elderly gentleman was on his way, I got back into my truck, buckled up and started to merge with the traffic. My Explorer had four-wheel drive, but I didn’t use it because I didn’t want to get out and manually lock the hubs. Besides, the snow was letting up and visibility was improving.



# KNOWLEDGE

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Because it was dark, I didn't see the ice ahead of me. I had slowly accelerated to 30 mph when the back of the Explorer suddenly began to fishtail. I turned the wheel and pumped my brakes, but I couldn't stop sliding. The Explorer slid from the left-hand lane across the right-hand lane and onto the right shoulder. The right side hit the piled up snow on the embankment and then flipped over. Only my seat belt kept me from being thrown around inside my vehicle and

ejected or seriously injured.

I could have missed all this excitement had I considered the risks before taking off on my trip. For example, had I checked the weather, I wouldn't have been surprised by the blizzard. I also should have planned a more reasonable trip schedule — one with an overnight stay and rest breaks. Trying to drive 1,200 miles straight through was a sure setup for fatigue, something you don't need when you're driving.

So how much did it cost me to be in a hurry? Well, it took

me longer to get to Fort Carson than I'd planned. In dollars and cents, the damage to my truck ran \$3,245. I was fortunate my insurance covered \$2,900 of that. I was even more fortunate this accident didn't cost me my life. Wearing my seat belt kept me alive so I could pass along these lessons learned. That said, preventing accidents is better than surviving them. ■

**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 U.S Army Combat Readiness Center MMP website for some examples of active mentoring programs.

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



## Funnel Cloud

One of the last things you expect to encounter when on a landing approach is a funnel cloud. Yet, it happened to me in Kandahar, Afghanistan, in the winter of 2013 on an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance mission.

The previous few weeks had presented varying weather. Unfortunately, on this day, the conditions were beginning to deteriorate. Thankfully, we were on the ground beginning our pre-mission planning. The weather was well above our minimums; however, recently, the forecasted weather was nowhere near what had actually occurred. This did not give the crew a warm-and-fuzzy feeling. We continued to monitor weather and, as a crew, decided to drive on with the mission.

Even though the weather was legal for us to take off, we still decided we needed another out. That being said, we decided we would take off and adjust our station time as the weather permitted. The mission began without a hitch, and everything went according to plan. We took off and were in the clouds. Eventually, we arrived at our airspace and flew under visual flight rules, above the clouds.

As the mission went on, we continued to monitor the weather, using the local automatic terminal information service as well as requesting current observations on the surface at the airfield via radio and other communications. We remained diligent, continually using our visual cues, the storm scope,

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 3 PHILLIP FLISSINGER  
Detachment 37, Operational Support – Aviation Command  
Kansas Army National Guard  
Topeka, Kansas



weather radar and ATIS. After about two hours, the forecast seemed to be coming true. Cloud cover continued to build and thunderstorms became more prevalent.

As a crew, we discussed our courses of action and decided it was in our best interest to return to base. On our approach back to Kandahar, we encountered moderate turbulence as we navigated around the storms. Still, everything was going according to plan based on the situation. After gaining contact with the tower, we received vectors to intercept the approach course. Then, on short final, we received a frantic call from the tower directing us to abort the approach and immediately make a 180 degree turn.

The air traffic controller informed us there was a funnel cloud over the airfield. We immediately followed his instructions and went into a holding pattern while communicating with approach control. After the storm passed, ATC gave us the clearance to proceed with the approach and

we landed without further incident.

This event proved to be a learning experience I will never forget. In my mind, we did everything we should have, but the situation still could have ended differently. I believed we executed our due diligence by reviewing the weather prior to departure, continually monitoring the weather using all of the tools available to us, realizing the weather was becoming unsafe and departing before our scheduled end of station time as well as making snap decisions as prescribed by ATC.

This mission brought to light a couple of things that are excellent to reinforce. First, the mission is the top priority; however, when conditions present themselves to be unsafe, it is imperative we take appropriate action to ensure the safety of the crew and the aircraft. Second, crew coordination is a critical component of our success and survivability of a dangerous situation. Take these things on every flight. ■

# ARE YOU READY?

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

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

Don't you want to protect your combat power?

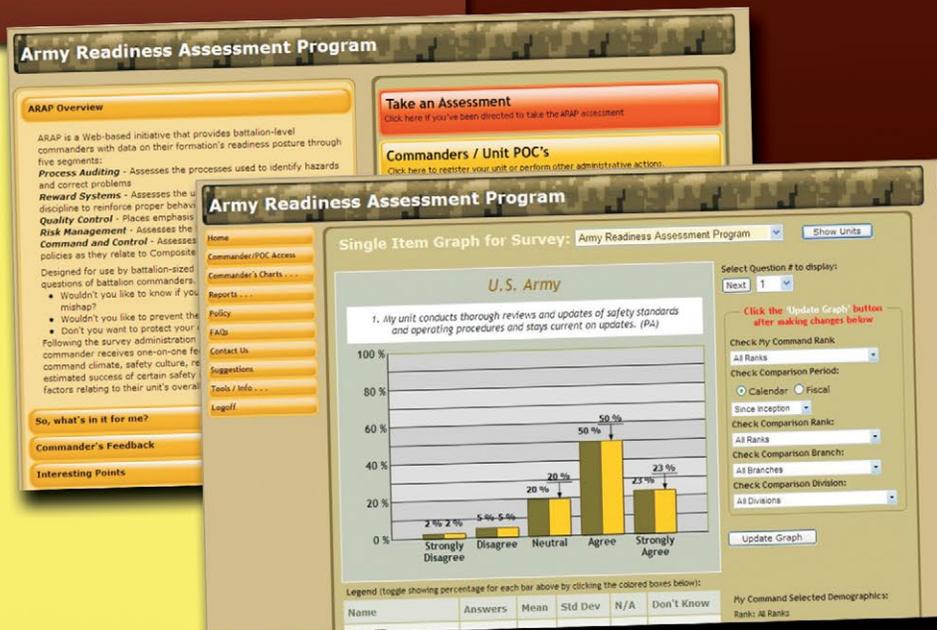
# ARAP

ARMY READINESS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

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

**Sign up for your assessment today!**

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





## Head Strong

I should be dead. The rate at which my head was accelerating when it struck the concrete barrier would have ended my life had it not been for my Kevlar. Call it what you will — divine intervention, perhaps premonition — but if I had not put on my Kevlar for that 10-minute bicycle ride, I would be dead.

Those of you who have deployed know transportation is constantly an issue, and my time in Iraq was no exception. There isn't a sufficient quantity of transportation assets to adequately cover a battalion in a 24/7, split-operations scenario. As Task Force 151's executive officer, I had my own HMMWV and driver, but I gave them up to the line companies who needed them more than I did.

I'd procured a bicycle during my first weeks in country and used it exclusively on the FOB. Not only was I staying in shape, I could also navigate quickly through areas blocked to vehicle traffic. I could, in fact, get to my office faster than if I were forced to drive. Getting to the flight-line was another story; but again, I was getting a lot of exercise.

Unfortunately, people being who they are, my bicycle was stolen. Well, it wasn't really stolen, someone just "traded" me theirs. It was the same model, but in much worse shape. However, the greatest

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



**“He spoke of leading by example and doing what was right regardless who was watching. Humbled, I knew he was right.”**

loss wasn't the bicycle, it was my helmet; I couldn't replace it easily. In a stroke of luck, when I bought the bicycle, the PX also had the protective helmet and lights required, by regulation, to properly operate it. Now I was without, and bicycle helmets were out of stock.

I could wear my Kevlar, but it was heavy and bulky compared to my bicycle helmet. And I definitely couldn't leave it outside on my bicycle like I had with my other helmet. Therefore, I pushed my luck. I rode helmetless for exactly two days before running into the COSCOM commander. He smiled

very patiently as I told my story of woe, but he wasn't smiling when he cited the regulation regarding proper bicycle operation. He spoke of leading by example and doing what was right regardless who was watching. Humbled, I knew he was right.

I walked my bicycle back to my room and left it there. For nearly two weeks I stubbornly walked everywhere, but I began losing patience with the time it took to get to my destination. Finally, I decided to cowboy up, put on my Kevlar and begin riding my bike again.

In Iraq, I'd go through periods when I couldn't sleep. My



## FYI

For optimal safety, ensure you are operating your bicycle in accordance with Army Regulation 385-10, The Army Safety Program:

**(1)** Bicycle safety will be an integral part of each installation traffic safety program.

**(2)** Bicycle helmets approved by the Consumer Product Safety Commission will be worn by all personnel, including Family members, who ride bicycles on Army installations. Previously purchased bicycle helmets certified by the American Society for Testing and Materials may also be worn but when purchasing a new helmet, riders should look for the Consumer Product Safety Commission certification. Outside CONUS, riders may wear HN helmets if

the helmet meets or exceeds Consumer Product Safety Commission standards.

**(3)** For Government-owned three-wheeled bicycles that are operated within operational work areas, commanders may use RM procedures to determine exceptions to the helmet requirement.

**(4)** Wearing headphones, earphones, or other listening devices while bicycling on or adjacent to roadways on DOD installations is prohibited.

**(5)** When bicycling on roadways on DOD installations during hours of darkness or reduced visibility, bicycles will be equipped with operable headlights and taillights, and the bicyclist will wear a reflective upper outer garment.

rule of thumb was if I lay in bed more than an hour, I'd get up and read. If I went back to bed and still couldn't sleep, I'd go to the office. This fateful night was no different. Unable to turn off my brain, I got dressed and headed for the door. I distinctly remember looking at my Kevlar and thinking, "It's 0130. Who would be up at this hour to see me?" To this day, I still can't honestly say why I put on my Kevlar, but I did. That action saved my life.

As I pedaled down the road in the middle of the night, I found myself riding into bright

light. Excavation equipment was in operation on the road and portable lights lit the primary and surrounding areas where the work was focused. Unfortunately, the lights destroyed my night vision, and I slowed to pass the area. With the road work now behind me, I accelerated but was having trouble seeing very far ahead.

Suddenly, my eyes saw something directly in front of me my brain couldn't register and process quickly enough to avoid. It was a concrete barrier, about 4 feet tall, spanning the entire width of the road. The

time between when I saw the barrier and realized what it was took just milliseconds. I hit the barrier at full force, crushing my front rim and forks, and breaking the gooseneck off at the upper frame. The sudden stop of the bike's front end accelerated me over the handle bars, dragging my biceps and forearms along the top of the barrier and slamming the front lip of my Kevlar on the opposite side. I heard the oddest sound I couldn't place until later; it was the air being forced out of my lungs as my body contacted the ground.

I just lay there as I tried to figure out what had happened. My disorientation slowly evaporated as I went from shock to anger. Sitting up, my back against the barrier, I regained my composure, checked for broken bones and then stood up slowly. As I stared at my bicycle, I realized how lucky — not just a little lucky, but miracle-type lucky — I was to have worn my Kevlar. The concrete at the point of impact had broken away, and my blood and skin decorated the top of the barrier.

If I hadn't worn my Kevlar, my forehead would have absorbed the impact with the barrier and I would have died. My military-issue helmet, designed to protect my head from fragmenting munitions, turned out to be a lifesaver in a way the Army likely never imagined. ■

# HERE IT COMES

are you ready for the ride?



## When riding on an Army installation:

- During hours of darkness or reduced visibility, bicycles must be equipped with an operable headlight or taillight.
- Riders must wear a reflective upper garment.
- Riders must wear a Consumer Product Safety Commission-approved helmet.
- Wearing headphones, earphones or other listening devices is prohibited.
- Yield to traffic when appropriate.
- Go with the traffic flow.
- Obey all traffic laws.
- Look before turning.



# READY ... OR NOT?

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



<https://safety.army.mil>



## THIS MONTH DECEMBER 2015



### 'Tis the Season (for Home Fires)

RONALD JEROME BROWN  
Fort Rucker Fire and Emergency Services  
Fort Rucker, Alabama

**A**s 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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KNOWLEDGE HOME



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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

**MATTHEW CHURCH**  
Watervliet Arsenal Safety Office  
Watervliet, New York

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. ■

**Family Strong!**

**Family engagement kit**

<https://safety.army.mil>

Army Safe is Army Strong and that starts with a Soldier's Family. Have the information to help you and your Family stay SAFE.

# HERE IT COMES



**Don't wait for the storm to come. Now is the time to get your vehicle ready.**

- Emergency kit
- Blanket
- Flashlight
- Heat source



ROUTE

# 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.

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



<https://safety.army.mil>



## The Cold, Hard Facts

RETIRED COL. JOSEPH MCKEON, M.D.  
Keller Army Community Hospital  
West Point, New York

**D**uring 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. ■

**ARE YOU READY?**

**ARAP**  
ARMY READINESS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

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

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Now GRAT provides you with the ability to electronically sign composite risk management worksheets as well as save draft worksheets. It will also automatically save them before the program times out, which is now relayed by a countdown timer and notice.





## Luck isn't a Plan

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 4 DOUG DETERMAN  
Western Army Aviation Training Site  
Silverbell Army Heliport  
Marana, Arizona

**T**here 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

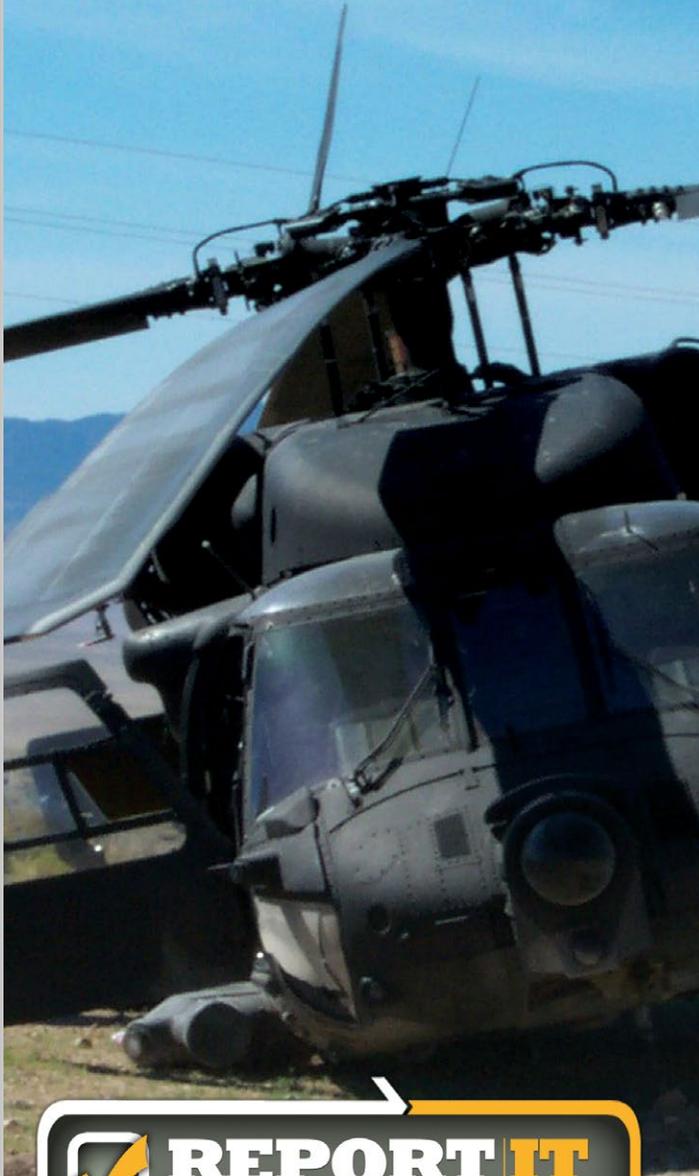
out the fire light, the crew chief simply called out a landing zone at the 10 o'clock position. Had this been proven to be an actual emergency requiring a landing, he had properly identified a suitable landing area. As pilots, our job is to process the information we get from the aircraft, radios, crewmembers 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.*

**S**pc. 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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# HERE IT COMES

Are you ready to crank?



# 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>



## 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. ■

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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

*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.

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



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## 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,



# KNOWLEDGE

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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

**T**here 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

**B**y 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**

*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 U.S Army Combat Readiness Center MMP website for some examples of active mentoring programs.*

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.

# 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>



## 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. ■

# ARE YOU READY?

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

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

Don't you want to protect your combat power?

# ARAP

ARMY READINESS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

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

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