

# READY ...OR NOT?



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## Risk management essential to preventing field accidents

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It was 0200, and the Soldiers were fast asleep. Exhausted by the OPTEMPO of the field training exercise, they had hastily set up their cots in unmarked positions near the perimeter of the battalion main command post, ready to tear down and move out the next day.

Sgt. Rider arrived to the compound late, at around 0400, in an MRAP. It had been a long day, and he was anxious to park the vehicle so he could sleep a few hours. Approaching the perimeter, he dispatched his assistant to ground guide him through the assembly area.

His ground guide was a young specialist who had joined the unit just in time to participate in the exercise. Still green behind the ears, he knew very little about standing operating procedures in tactical environments, much less about ground guiding in the dark.

The specialist's inexperience was evident when only a few minutes later he mistakenly signaled Rider to back the MRAP into the sleeping area, crushing one of the Soldiers.

According to Chief Warrant Officer 3 Izabela Gibson, course manager and instructor, Ground Safety Officer Course, U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center, this fatality was due to several missteps.

"Accidents like this are tragic and can be prevented if the right supervision takes place," Gibson said. "Each of the Soldiers should have been adequately trained in proper ground guide and tactical operations procedures. Unit SOPs and Army Regulation 385-10, The Army Safety Program, are there for a reason. Leaders must conform to those standards and conduct a unit risk assessment even before they leave garrison."

Gibson explained the five-step risk management process is easily integrated into the military decision-making process.

"An accurate risk assessment would have identified the hazards of driver fatigue, vehicle movement through sleeping areas, and the need to establish and adequately mark designated sleeping areas with chem lights or engineer tape," she said. "Once those hazards were identified, the unit should have implemented control measures to minimize the risk. The standard for risk management is leadership, and leaders must make informed decisions to control hazards or accept risks."

The Ground Risk Assessment Tool, an interactive, automated online system that empowers leaders and Soldiers to reduce accidental loss and injury, can help with those decisions.

GRAT references ATP 5-19, Risk Management, which provides step-by-step instruction on accident and injury avoidance under various scenarios, including field training environments.

“According to unit SOP and Army regulation, leaders are required to document deliberate risk management on DD Form 2977, Deliberate Risk Management Worksheet,” Gibson said. “More than just a worksheet, this form requires leaders to take into account all mitigating factors or conditions that could result in accident, injury or fatality.”

However, she said, identifying those factors is only part of the equation.

“Leaders must then accept and implement the necessary safety control measures to mitigate risks,” she added. “They sign and become responsible for implementing those safety control measures.”

Gibson encouraged leaders and Soldiers at all levels to leverage GRAT to ensure Soldier safety.

“Safety is a combat multiplier,” she said. “We owe it to ourselves to do what we can to preserve our nation’s most precious resource, the American Soldier.”

For more information on GRAT, visit <https://safety.army.mil>.