

ARMY GROUND RISK-MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

Countermeasure

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Heat Is the Hunter

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I'm Excited to Join Your Team as the Director of Army Safety!

BG Jim Simmons has done a truly remarkable job over the past two years as the Director of Army Safety. He has helped chart the right strategic course for Army safety and has already transformed the multifunctional Safety Center into an organization that now addresses risk management and safety issues from platoon level to Department of the Army on a daily basis. BG Simmons' forward thinking has set a new standard in managing safety throughout the Army.

As your new Director of Army Safety, I will do my very best to continue to steer the course outlined in the Army Safety Strategic Plan and ensure that Army safety and risk management are fully embedded into our interim and objective forces. More importantly, I am committed to helping each of you as we protect the force today and preserve our combat power for tomorrow.

The Army holds us, as commanders, responsible and accountable for the safety of our soldiers. This is an awesome responsibility—one that often prevents sleep in the early morning hours and triggers a mental review of the mission risk assessment just prior to a training event, major exercise, or imminent enemy contact. It is a responsibility that no commander can, or does, take lightly.

Statistics clearly prove that commanders who use all the tools available to identify hazards and mitigate risks have the biggest impact on their units. The chain of command who ruthlessly enforces standards and discipline while using unit safety personnel and those that are resident within the Army safety community will continue to make the difference. The Safety Center stands ready to assist. Give us a call!

Having just returned from deployments in both Afghanistan and Iraq, I personally saw commanders aggressively applying risk management with tremendous results; however, there is still work to be done. Thanks to the quick dissemination of information from our accident investigations, many of the safety lessons learned from both ground and aviation operations are already available and we're currently taking a hard look at them. For example, we have had a number of negligent discharges of weapons. This is clearly an indication that we need to better address this issue in our ground accident prevention programs. We'll look at ways to address this problem with, potentially, more training with magazines in weapons to ensure soldiers know proper clearing procedures.

I am truly appreciative of the opportunity to serve in the United States Army. I am particularly excited to be joining the team of dedicated professionals who every day diligently seek ways to make the Army a safer place for our soldiers to live and work.

This month as we celebrate our Nation's independence, let us not forget to reflect on the service and sacrifices of those who secured our freedom. Let us be especially grateful to all those who today willingly serve to maintain our free way of life. Have a safe and happy Independence Day! 🇺🇸

COL(P) Joseph A. Smith

Heat Is the Hunter

In the 1964 movie “Fate Is the Hunter” actor Glenn Ford investigated the cause of a fatal airliner crash by recreating the events in a step-by-step fashion. He was ultimately successful—almost too successful as he nearly killed himself and another crew in the process. He learned there was a chain of events that led to the crash and it was a chain that could be broken once it was understood. So it was in the deaths of two soldiers last year. For these two men—both in excellent physical condition—heat, not fate, was the hunter. And just as Glenn Ford did in the movie, we are going to take a step-by-step look at how both of these soldiers died and offer some suggestions that could have broken the links in these tragedies.

A Fatal FTX

The Pre-Ranger Course (PRC) is designed to prepare soldiers for Ranger School and is modeled after the Army’s “crawl-walk-run” paradigm. The course culminates in an 8-day field training exercise (FTX), which is divided into 4 days of training and 4 days of continuous patrolling operations. During the continuous patrolling operations, students conduct three main missions: raid, reconnaissance, and ambush. Following the final day of patrolling, the students take part in a land navigation course conducted at a different range. It was during that course that one soldier died and several others suffered heat injuries.

During one of the training days one of the students, we’ll call him “Student 1,” became infected with poison ivy. A Ranger cadre medic looked at Student 1 and decided to take him to the hospital, where he was seen by an emergency room physician. Student 1 was diagnosed with cellulitis (a skin infection) and poison ivy. After being discharged from the emergency room, Student 1 was taken back to the barracks, where he showered and changed into clean clothes. He then returned to the training site and completed the rest of the training scheduled for that day.

The next morning a field medic conducting foot checks saw Student 1 and noted that his cellulitis was improving and that he had been prescribed an antihistamine. The medic warned Student 1 that the antihistamine would make him drowsy and that he shouldn’t take it.

The rest of the day was devoted to planning and executing an ambush mission. After the last mission was complete, the PRC students returned to the range and had MREs for dinner. They had approximately 12 hours of administrative downtime and rest afterward.

The PRC students arrived at the land navigation course at approximately 0730 the next morning. While they waited for chow, the





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U.S. Army Safety Center

medic performed the morning foot check and provided follow-up for all students requiring care. The medic noted that there seemed to be some improvement in Student 1's symptoms and that he had no major complaints. At 0845, the land navigation course non-commissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) began the safety briefing and handed out maps and protractors for use on the course. The PRC students were divided into four groups and allowed 4 hours to complete the course by successfully finding five of seven points. Student 1 was placed in the second group.

At 0915 the cadre began calling the groups forward to begin the course. At 0930, the first group departed on the course, followed by the second group at 0939. The two other groups left the start point in approximate 10- to 15-minute intervals. According to the Range Control log, the heat reached Category 5 (the highest heat risk category) at 1059. At approximately 1330, one PRC student encountered Student 1 about 700 meters northwest of the finish point. Another PRC student on the course reported seeing Student 1 lying down, plotting his return route. This was the last time Student 1 was seen alive.

Student 1's projected finish time was 1339. About a half hour later, two cadre members left the start point to verify the grid coordinates of two points being disputed by a PRC student. As they traveled to verify the points, the cadre looked for students who were beyond their time limit. At approximately 1440 after verifying the challenged points, the cadre left the start point in vehicles to search for three missing students.

The range NCOIC had notified the cadre of the missing students and called in additional cadre members and regimental staff to assist with the search. Cadre members drove the trails around the course, blowing their horns to attract the attention of the missing students. Around 1530, Range Control was notified of the missing students. About a half hour later one PRC student was found walking on the road en route to the start point. At approximately 1620, Range Control contacted the military police and informed them there were still two students missing. The desk sergeant immediately dispatched a unit to assist with the search and within 10 minutes the unit found the second missing PRC student on the side of the road.

Student 1 was still missing, so around 1715 the cadre began forming the PRC students into groups to assist with the search. At approximately 1800, additional cadre began arriving and assisting with the search. Student 1's body was found about two hours later, and he was pronounced dead shortly after the EMS crew arrived.

It is important to note that Student 1 wasn't the only PRC student to suffer a heat-related injury that day. The other heat injuries are listed below:

- One PRC student said that he had a severe headache and trouble concentrating as he navigated the course. He had several disputed points and the cadre asked him to replot his points on the map. He found that he was unable to plot the points.
- Another PRC student stated that he completely undressed and entered a pond when he realized he was becoming a heat casualty. He said he would not have been able to complete the course otherwise. This student successfully completed the course and graduated the PRC.
- Another PRC student said that as he navigated the course, he had a severe headache and two episodes of vomiting. He said he was given water after completing the course and told to sit in front of a fan to cool down.
- Cadre driving the roads looking for lost PRC students found another student walking by the road. This student said he recalled checking

his watch at 1355 and realizing that he had 5 minutes to make it to the start point. The next thing he remembered was being awakened by the sound of a vehicle horn 2 hours later. He was transported to the start point, given water and oral rehydration salts, and placed under a fan.

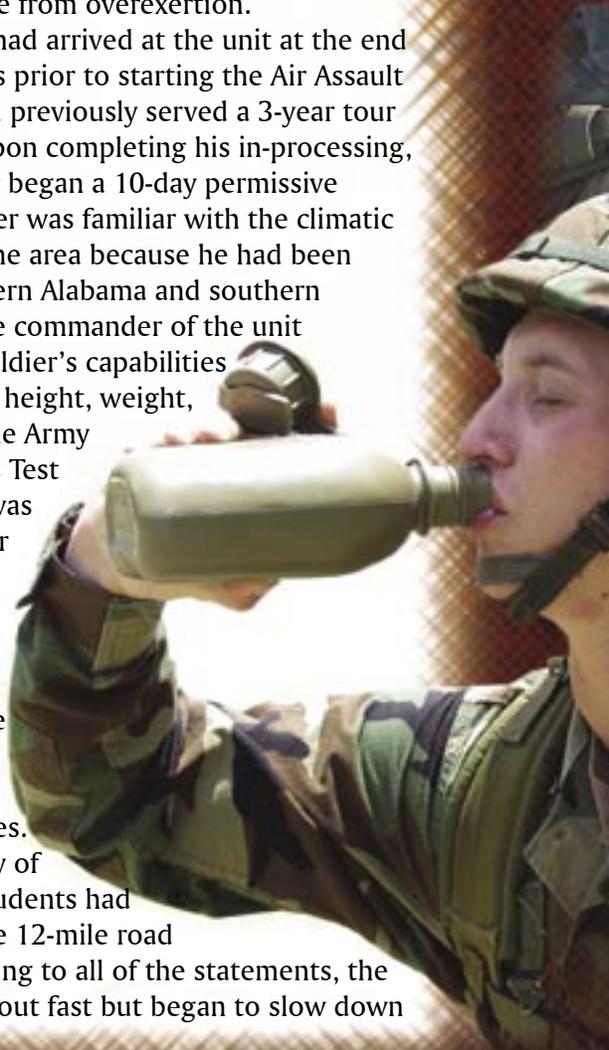
Heat was the "hunter" in Student 1's death and in the injuries suffered by the other PRC students. Heat was also the hunter in another fatality, this time during a 12-mile road march. We'll take a step-by-step look at this incident and end by discussing some measures to help prevent heat-related injuries.

He Could See the End

A soldier was participating in a 12-mile road march as part of the Sabalauski Air Assault School, Fort Campbell, Ky., on the last day of training before graduation when he suffered a fatal heat stroke from overexertion.

The soldier had arrived at the unit at the end of June, 50 days prior to starting the Air Assault course. He had previously served a 3-year tour in Germany. Upon completing his in-processing, he immediately began a 10-day permissive TDY. The soldier was familiar with the climatic conditions of the area because he had been raised in northern Alabama and southern Tennessee. The commander of the unit assessed the soldier's capabilities based upon his height, weight, and score on the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT), which was conducted prior to his selection for Air Assault training.

The soldier got through the 10-day course without any noted difficulties. On the final day of training, the students had to complete the 12-mile road march. According to all of the statements, the soldier started out fast but began to slow down



as he progressed through the road march. Between the 7- and 11-mile points he walked with two other students. They noted that he was complaining of cramps in his legs, but had been sipping water from his canteen. At approximately the 11-mile point, the soldier fell behind the two other students. As he approached the final 150 meters of the foot march, the soldier fell to his knees. Several of the cadre shouted to him to encourage him to finish. The first sergeant went out to the soldier. He responded to the first sergeant's questions, stating that he didn't want any help

and that he was going to successfully complete the road march. The soldier attempted to stand, but couldn't get back onto his feet. Within minutes, the allotted time for the road march expired.

The first sergeant told the soldier to sit back, and cadre members removed his equipment. Medics on the scene started an intravenous line and prepared to move the soldier to the troop medical clinic (TMC). The senior TMC medic evaluated the soldier and found his core body temperature was 108 degrees. The medic immediately began cooling the soldier and requested an ambulance

Fluid Replacement Guidelines for Warm-Weather Training

(Applies to Average Acclimated Soldier Wearing BDU, Hot-Weather)

Heat Category	WBGT Index °F	Easy Work		Moderate Work		Hard Work	
		Work/Rest*	Water Per Hour	Work/Rest*	Water Per Hour	Work/Rest*	Water Per Hour
1	78-81.9	No limit	½ qt	No limit	¾ qt	40/20 min	¾ qt
2 (Green)	82-84.9	No limit	½ qt	50/10 min	¾ qt	30/30 min	1 qt
3 (Yellow)	85-87.9	No limit	¾ qt	40/20 min	¾ qt	30/30 min	1 qt
4 (Red)	88-89.9	No limit	¾ qt	30/30 min	¾ qt	20/40 min	1 qt
5 (Black)	>90	50/10 min	1 qt	20/40 min	1 qt	10/50 min	1 qt

*Rest means minimal physical activity (sitting or standing) and should be accomplished in the shade, if possible.

Note 1: The work/rest times and fluid replacement volumes will sustain performance and hydration for at least 4 hours of work in the specified heat category. Individual water needs will vary \pm ¼ quart per hour.

Note 2: CAUTION: Hourly fluid intake should not exceed 1½ quarts. Daily fluid intake should not exceed 12 quarts.

Note 3: Wearing MOPP gear or body armor adds 10°F to WBGT Index.

Examples:

Easy Work	Moderate Work	Hard Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking on a hard surface at 2.5 mph, <30-pound load Weapons maintenance Manual of arms Marksmanship training Drill and ceremony 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking on a hard surface at 3.5 mph, <40-pound load Walking on loose sand at 2.5 mph, no load Calisthenics Patrolling Individual movement techniques; i.e., low crawl, high crawl Defensive position construction Field assaults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking on a hard surface at 3.5 mph, >40-pound load Walking on loose sand at 2.5 mph with load

Note: Soldiers who are overweight, dieting, or past heat casualties are more prone to heat injuries. As a result, their activities must be closely monitored.

from the emergency room to transport him to the hospital. Upon arriving at the emergency room, the soldier was immediately treated for advanced stages of heat stroke. He did not respond to the treatment and went into cardiopulmonary arrest and died.

Why Did These Soldiers Die?

Both soldiers' heat-related injuries were caused by prolonged exposure to hot temperatures, limited fluid intake, and the failure of temperature regulation mechanisms in the brain. Heat injuries can affect anyone, regardless of age or physical condition. We are learning that soldiers don't become heat casualties just because of the current day's activities and factors—it also includes the heat stress issues from the preceding days. The cumulative effects of heat on the body are what cause a soldier to become a heat casualty.

How Can We Prevent These?

It is vital for leaders at all levels to be involved in training, and that means being with the soldiers and observing them while they are conducting rigorous training. Leaders and their troops also must be aware of the most frequent symptoms of heat-related injuries and know how to treat them. That information is provided below:

Symptoms of Heat Exhaustion:

- Dizziness, fatigue, weakness, and headache
- Pale and clammy skin
- Rapid and weak pulse
- Fast and shallow breathing
- Muscle cramps
- Nausea, vomiting

Symptoms of Heat Stroke:

- Often preceded by heat exhaustion and its symptoms
- Hot, dry, and flushed skin
- High body temperature
- Rapid heartbeat
- Confusion
- Loss of consciousness

There are two major steps you can take to avoid heat stress: acclimatize yourself and adopt special habits. Acclimatizing simply means that you allow your body to adjust to the heat naturally and gradually. This can be accomplished by gradually increasing the time you spend in the heat until you reach the total amount of time desired. Remember that if you've been away from a hot environment for a week or longer, you'll have to acclimatize yourself again when you return.

You'll also need to adopt some special habits during physical activity in hot weather to help you avoid heat-related injuries. Those habits are not new ideas, but are all-too-often forgotten. They're listed below:

- **Drink plenty of water during hot weather**—The body can lose up to 2 liters of water per hour for short periods in high temperatures. Drink cool water every 15 to 20 minutes, even if you're not thirsty. Remember that thirst is not a reliable guide to the body's need for water in extreme heat. Use caution not to over-hydrate as a condition known as hyponatremia can develop.

- **Avoid alcohol**—Alcohol causes dehydration (an added stressor for your body in hot environments).

- **Use salt**—Add salt as you normally would to your food, but avoid salt tablets, which could cause you to have too much salt in your system. (CAUTION: Check with your physician about salt intake, especially if you have any heart or circulatory ailments.)

- **Eat your rations**—Food aids in water absorption. Eat your issued MREs, using the salt packages provided, during periods of strenuous physical work in the heat.

- **Rest often**—Rest in the shade. Short, frequent breaks are more effective than long, infrequent ones.

- **Plan ahead**—Do the most strenuous exercise or work during the cooler periods of the day and pace yourself. 

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SMA Tilley Sends

SMA JACK L. TILLEY
Sergeant Major of the Army



I just returned from an incredible trip to Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Qatar, and Uzbekistan and wanted to tell you how impressed I was with the performance of our soldiers.

I spent two days in Iraq meeting with soldiers from 3rd Infantry Division, V Corps, 101st Airborne Infantry Division (Air Assault), and 3rd Army. Everywhere I went I met heroes—soldiers who put their lives on the line to save their buddies, medics who braved gunfire to patch up the wounded, and sergeants who live the Noncommissioned Officer's (NCO) Creed.

These soldiers told me they were successful because of their training. They lived the motto, "Train How You Will Fight." They forced their troops to wear heavy body armor that, on countless occasions, stopped rounds from killing them.

They corrected deficiencies, led tough physical training programs, and made safety a priority. They did what NCOs are supposed to do—enforce the standards. This dedication led to our victory and helped ensure we will bring America's sons and daughters home alive.

Things are not over. The war on terrorism is still going on and is not going to get easier. Iraq is far from being a safe place. We still have challenges ahead and cannot allow complacency to settle in.

One area that I want NCOs to take very seriously is negligent discharge. We have had too many incidents involving soldiers failing to properly clear their weapons.

Every week during Sergeant's Time or other training, leaders should have their soldiers practice putting a magazine into their weapon and clearing it. This is a simple task that cannot be taken for granted.

As soldiers begin redeploying, I will need your

support in getting them into Noncommissioned Officer Education System training. Deployments during the past months have created a backlog in our schools, and we need to ensure our soldiers get in and complete these essential courses.

At the same time, we must continue to take care of our family members back home. It's easy to get caught up in the mission and forget to keep families informed. Although the media on the battlefield have done an incredible job of keeping our families updated, they need and want to hear directly from unit leaders.

Taking care of our families also applies to our retiring NCOs. The Army Career and Alumni Program is there to help ease your transition to civilian life. I encourage you to take full advantage of that resource because it is vital when you retire. You have given so much to our Army. Take the necessary time to prepare for your second life.

Finally, SoldiersRadio.com has been providing a great resource for military news and information. This site is linked directly off the Army homepage and needs your support.

SoldiersRadio.com is now almost exclusively limited to the Internet and will soon be available only online. Installation public affairs officers and automation officials need to support this effort by allowing access to the streaming audio and video that is provided.

Thank you again for all your hard work and continued support. 🇺🇸

HOOAH!

Recent Army accidents have revealed a disturbing trend: our soldiers are being killed and injured by improper weapons handling. These accidents occur for a variety of reasons, insufficient training, ineffective supervision, negligence, inattentiveness, or outright indiscipline. This must come to an end—now. One hurt soldier is one too many.

All soldiers, regardless of their MOS, must be proficient with their assigned weapon. Operation Iraqi Freedom clearly demonstrated that *any* unit might have to engage the enemy. Weapons proficiency is a cumulative and degradable skill that must be instilled into each soldier and constantly maintained.

second nature. The selector switch stays on SAFE and the soldier's finger stays off the trigger unless engaging targets or when enemy contact is imminent. A well-trained soldier can follow these safety procedures and still rapidly and accurately engage the enemy. Whenever you see a safety violation, correct it. A moment's inattention can lead to disaster.

Annual range qualification doesn't necessarily indicate weapons proficiency. Soldiers not only must effectively engage targets, they must also perform other associated tasks including:

GET On-Target WITH

We train as we fight and we fight as we train. Soldiers in combat areas wear body armor, why not have them wear it when qualifying and training with their weapons? Training must reflect battlefield conditions as closely as can be safely done. Hard, realistic training is critical to success in future operations. Anything less is a disservice to our soldiers.

Muzzle control, selector switch operation and fire discipline are critical to weapons safety and can't be taught solely in the classroom environment. They must be incorporated into your regular training, and you must always enforce the standard. Soldiers should become so comfortable with their weapon that its safe and proper use is

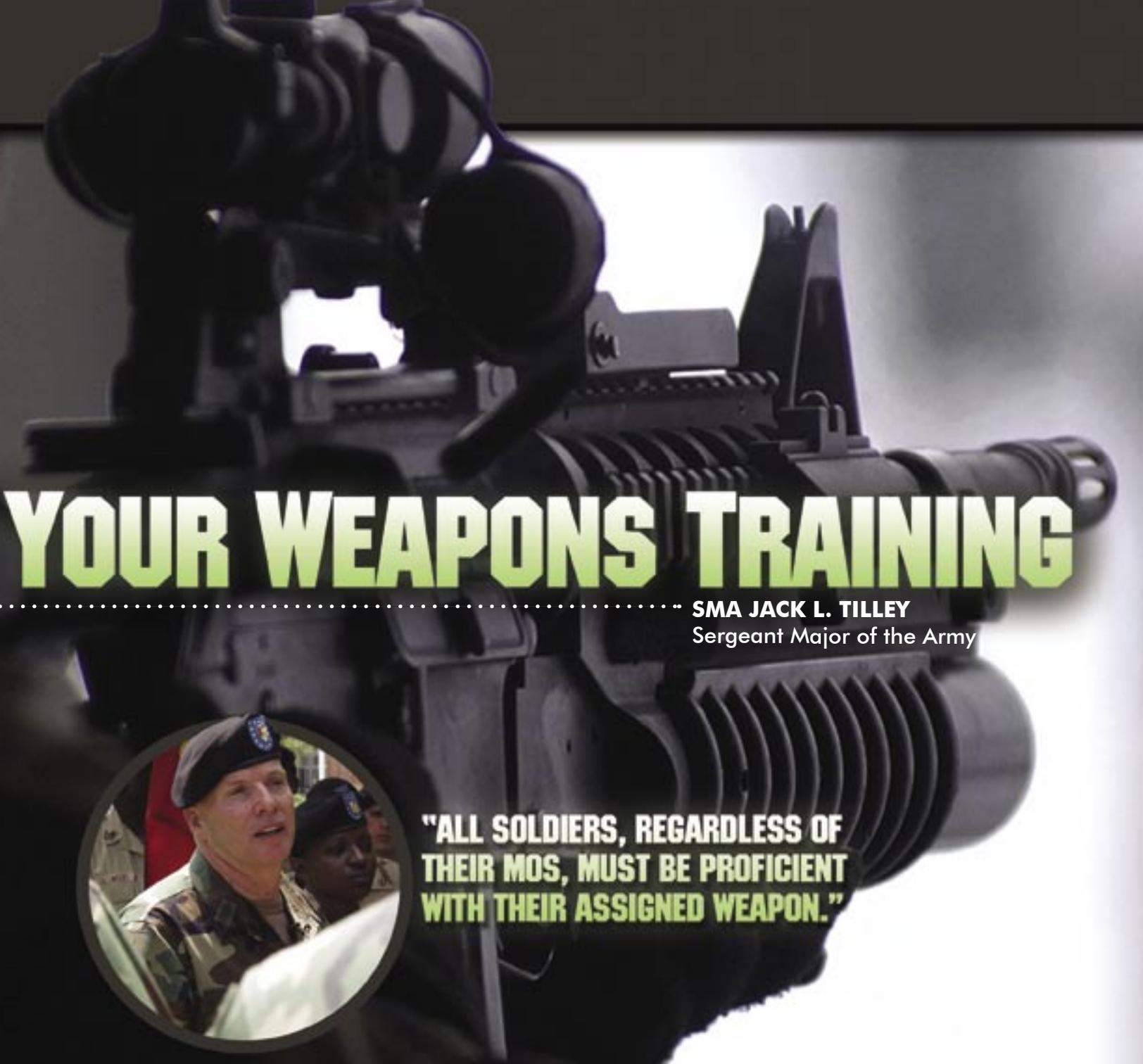
- Clearing procedures
- Loading and unloading procedures
- Immediate action
- Remedial action
- Disassembly and reassembly
- Weapons maintenance
- Functions check
- Preventive maintenance checks and services

Can your soldiers perform these tasks to time and standard? If they can't, they're not properly prepared.

While the basic operating principles remain the same for many small arms, there can be significant differences that can put the untrained soldier at risk. Does your M249 Squad Automatic Weapon gunner understand how an open-bolt weapon operates? How about the rest of your soldiers? Soldiers unfamiliar with open-bolt weapons have had accidental discharges while attempting to chamber a round. When cross-training your soldiers, make sure they become proficient with all of your unit's weapons. Circumstances might require a rifleman to become a machine gunner in a hurry. Would that rifleman be ready? Would you be ready?

A COUPLE OF Examples

- After cleaning his weapon, the soldier performed a function check with the butt of the rifle on the floor and the muzzle pointed at himself. A round discharged, fatally injuring the soldier.
- The soldier believed his weapon was unloaded. The weapon fired and severely injured another soldier.



YOUR WEAPONS TRAINING

SMA JACK L. TILLEY
Sergeant Major of the Army



**"ALL SOLDIERS, REGARDLESS OF
THEIR MOS, MUST BE PROFICIENT
WITH THEIR ASSIGNED WEAPON."**

Weapons proficiency is the province of the NCO. From the youngest corporal to the Sergeant Major of the Army, we are the primary trainers and guardians of the standard, and competence is our watchword. We must take ownership and make it happen. If we don't, then who will? Our young soldiers depend on us for our experience and our expertise. The soldiers we train today will become the Army leadership

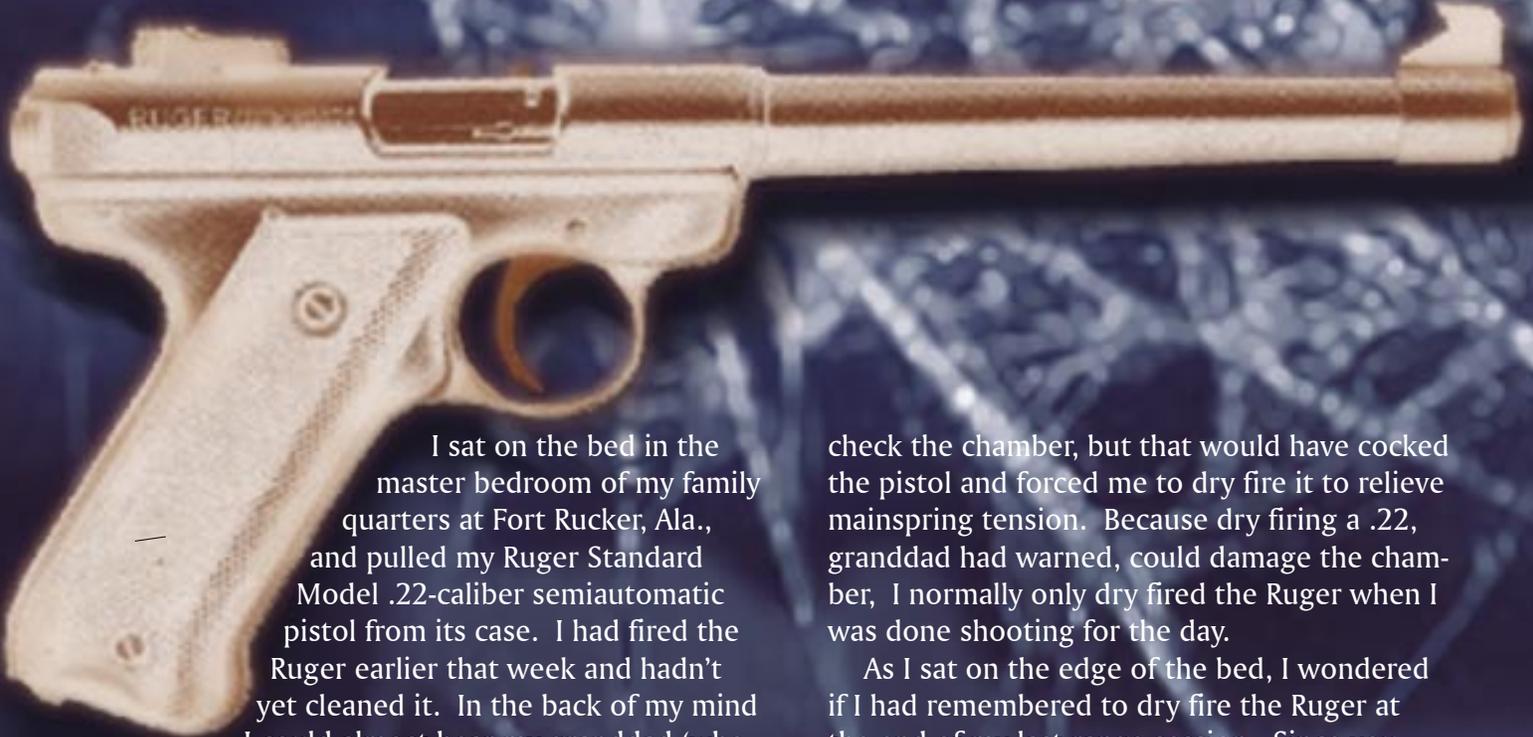
of tomorrow. We must arm them with the tools, techniques and procedures to prepare them for that task.

You have proven yourselves as the most professional NCO Corps in the world, a force that stands ready to fight and win on the modern battlefield. Now I challenge you to continue that tradition of excellence. Train our soldiers well, train them to standard, and keep them safe. 

Seven Years' Bad

Bob Van Elsberg
Managing Editor

Ever heard the old superstition that breaking a mirror will get you seven years' bad luck? Well, superstitions are only in the mind; however, a .22 slug zipping through a bedroom mirror is a reality. And for a mistake like that, seven years' bad luck could be a "light" sentence.



I sat on the bed in the master bedroom of my family quarters at Fort Rucker, Ala., and pulled my Ruger Standard Model .22-caliber semiautomatic pistol from its case. I had fired the Ruger earlier that week and hadn't yet cleaned it. In the back of my mind I could almost hear my granddad (who taught me to shoot) saying, "Clean it the day you shoot it!"

I dropped the magazine out of the grip and checked to see if there were any rounds in it. It was empty, so I *assumed* that the Ruger was unloaded. I could have pulled the slide back to

check the chamber, but that would have cocked the pistol and forced me to dry fire it to relieve mainspring tension. Because dry firing a .22, granddad had warned, could damage the chamber, I normally only dry fired the Ruger when I was done shooting for the day.

As I sat on the edge of the bed, I wondered if I had remembered to dry fire the Ruger at the end of my last range session. Since you couldn't tell if the Ruger was cocked by simply looking at it, the easiest way to tell was to gently pull the trigger back and see if it moved freely or stiffened suddenly. If the trigger moved freely, the pistol was uncocked. If the trigger stiffened suddenly, that was a sure sign

D LUCK

I'd inadvertently left the pistol cocked.

I pulled back on the Ruger's trigger about a quarter of an inch when it stiffened. Because I had already checked the magazine and found it empty, I *assumed* the chamber was also empty. Since I couldn't take the pistol apart for cleaning with it still cocked, I pulled the trigger all the way back.

"Blam!" The Ruger went off, sending a round through the bedroom mirror. My wife ran into the bedroom to see what had happened. As I sat there shaking, I imagined with horror what would have happened had she been in the bullet's path.

chamber more than once on some firearms. I've owned lever action rifles where a cartridge would occasionally jam in the tubular magazine, only to jar loose later and slide into position for chambering.

There is a simple moral to this story—never handle a firearm without checking its chamber to make sure it is empty. I was lucky that I didn't hit anything more precious to me than the bedroom mirror—and even that didn't cost me seven years' bad luck. However, don't count on good luck to keep you safe around a weapon. Don't assume your privately owned weapon is unloaded and don't take the word of a friend who hands you a firearm. Accidents can happen. Don't let seven years of bad luck—or worse—happen to you!

"There is no such thing as an unloaded gun."

When I thought about it later, I couldn't believe that I made such a potentially deadly mistake. After all, I had been raised around guns. Granddad taught me to shoot a handgun with his High-Standard "Sport King"—a .22 pistol very similar to the Ruger. He also taught me to treat every gun as if it was loaded. And it wasn't just his voice I was hearing in the back of my head. I was an Army sergeant. How many times had I qualified with my M-16 and made sure the chamber was empty before leaving the firing line? Unfortunately, this time I thought I knew better while handling my own weapon. I found out the hard way that I didn't.

Now I live and breathe that well-founded axiom, "There is no such thing as an unloaded gun." Whether the firearm is a single shot, pump, bolt action, lever action, semiautomatic or revolver, I ALWAYS check the chamber. And although it might sound odd, I check the

Your Story Is Important!

Have you ever had an experience with a privately owned weapon that taught you a valuable lesson in safety? Chances are your lessons learned could help protect some other soldier. Why not share what you've learned through the pages of this magazine? You don't have to be a polished writer, just jot down in sequence what happened and what you learned. Also, such accidents can be embarrassing (the editor knows first-hand), so we'll be glad to protect your privacy by printing your story anonymously. You can e-mail your story to countermeasure@safetycenter.army.mil, or fax it to us at (334) 255-3003, DSN 558-3003. You can also use old-fashioned "snail mail" and send a letter to: U.S. Army Safety Center, Attn: *Countermeasure*, Bldg 4905, 5th Avenue, Fort Rucker, AL 36362-5363. 

A man in a U.S. Army camouflage uniform is shown from the chest up, holding a black motorcycle helmet. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera. The background is dark and out of focus, showing mechanical parts of a motorcycle. The text "I Am Still Here" is overlaid on the right side of the image in a large, stylized font.

I Am Still Here

MSG SHANE CURTIS

Aviation Systems Safety Manager
U.S. Army Safety Center

Motorcycles were my thing as I grew up. I raced in motocross competitions just about every weekend and worked for the shop that sponsored me. I fell often enough to learn the hard way that my helmet, gloves, elbow and shoulder pads, boots, long-sleeved jersey, and riding pants really did work. But it wasn't until one night after I joined the Army that I learned just how important my helmet was.

I bought a new Yamaha 650 and ordered a full-face helmet that looked cool and worked. That cost me some money. I always needed more money, which meant I needed to get my sergeant stripes. To get that promotion, I needed to go to night school to further my education and gain an airframe and powerplant (A&P) license. Riding my motorcycle was part of that process. When I got off duty, I rode home, grabbed my books, and then headed off to school on my new bike.

But all that would change one night. As I was going down the four-lane road heading towards our house, a teenage girl who'd had her license less than a week came toward me from the opposite direction. She saw me coming her way, but thought the car behind her was going to rear-end her, so she turned in front of me thinking she could make it. She didn't—instead, she hit me head-on.

I flew over the handlebars and into her windshield. The back of my head bounced off her steering wheel, and then I was thrown face-first into a telephone pole on the side of the road. The doctor said that if I hadn't been wearing my full-face helmet, parts of my head would have been smashed into the windshield and the left side of my face would have been left on the pole.

I was in and out of consciousness for the first four days after the accident. I woke up long enough to say that I wasn't unconscious the whole time, but I was in a semi-unconscious state for the next two weeks. By the time I realized what was going on; close to a month had passed. Although my parents had come to see me, I didn't even know they were there. Some of my co-workers were there every day to help my wife, who basically lived in my hospital room with me—but I don't remember that either.

I spent more than two months in the hospital receiving physical and occupational therapy. I had suffered a double brain concussion, and my brain swelled so badly the doctors thought they would have to drill holes in my skull to relieve the pressure. Fortunately for me, the day I was supposed to have the drilling done the swelling went down on its own.

I lost most of my memory and even had to

learn how to walk again. The doctor would give me a razor and tell me to shave, but it wasn't until after I was released that I found out the razor didn't have a blade in it. The doctors just wanted to see how good my coordination was—they didn't trust me with a blade.

I also had a problem with my memory; I knew names and people, but that was about it. Part of my therapy was going back out to the airfield to learn stuff that I once knew. It was only after I was told what an item was that it rang a bell and would come back to me. I'd say, "Oh yeah, that's what that is, now tell me again what it does." Once they'd do that I'd say, "Oh yeah that's right, I remember now!" After a little more than two months passed the doctor gave me a quick "test." He told me to remember three things: the number 7, ice cream, and blue sky. After he talked to me for what seemed like an hour, he asked what the three items were. Once I told him, he said I was ready to go home.

The things I couldn't do that were listed on my profile made me feel like there was little that I could do! No driving for a year, no climbing on top of aircraft, no going inside an aircraft unless the ramp was down and I could walk up it. I couldn't stand for more than 10 minutes, walk more than a mile, run, do physical training, and—for the fear of black-outs—go anywhere alone. My flying and crewing days were over for the next couple of years.

It took years of hard work before I got back to normal—well, about as normal as I will ever be. I still have some minor problems with my memory, but I did make it back on flying status after several years. For me, life is good. I am living a life that would have ended if I hadn't been wearing my helmet the night that girl turned in front of me.

You hear people argue that wearing a helmet gets in the way of their "personal freedom" or keeps them from hearing or seeing dangers around them. Well, I can tell you from experience that helmets work because I AM STILL HERE. 

Contact the author at (334) 255-9859, DSN 558-9859, e-mail curtiss@safetycenter.army.mil.

SAVED by the BELT

Think putting on your seatbelt is a hassle? Maybe you're in too much of a hurry to bother. Maybe you think it's uncomfortable and restricts you too much in your car. The author was a state trooper before coming to work full-time for the Army Reserve. Both as a reservist and a state trooper, he's seen the difference seatbelts make. Check out his three short "slice-of-life" experiences below.

CW5 R. KEITH LANE
HQ, 244th Aviation Brigade
Brigade Safety Officer
Fort Sheridan, Ill.

Incident 1

We had a Troop Program Unit Reserve major that I served with who was also a farmer and lived about four hours away from the post. He usually worked late on the Fridays before his duty weekends and left even later to drive to drill, typically getting there around 0200. He would then park in the Reserve Center parking lot and sleep until it was time for formation.

One Friday night, he left home even later than usual and was still on the road at 0300. About that time he hit a driveway culvert in a ditch beside the highway where it went from a long straight section to an "S" turn to the left. He'd driven that road many times and thought he could drive it in his sleep. The culvert proved him wrong. At 60 mph, his car flipped end-over-end twice before it came to rest upside-down. He was still strapped into his seat, hanging by his seatbelt, but he was now unconscious instead of just asleep. He was less than 30 miles from the Reserve Center.

I got the call about 0800 and, after informing the command group, went to the hospital to gather information for the accident report. Our major was pretty well beat-up, but he was mostly just "bruised and contused," except for the severe laceration to his wallet for the cost of a new car. The thing that stuck out in my mind was the doctor telling him if

he hadn't been wearing his seatbelt, he would have been a dead man.

Incident 2

A young state trooper was traveling south on a two-lane highway at the posted speed limit of 55 mph in his patrol car. He was wearing his seatbelt properly, as all state troopers are required to do.

Driving northbound on the same roadway was a man on his way home from work who had stopped at a local pub and downed a few too many. The man was driving a full-sized van and following another vehicle traveling just under the speed limit. The drunk driver was not only impatient; he also hadn't bothered to fasten his seatbelt.

The drunk driver decided to pass the slower vehicle and suddenly pulled into the oncoming lane, going straight at the trooper. There was nothing the trooper could do to avoid the head-on collision. The impact killed the van driver, who was pronounced dead at the scene, and the trooper was unconscious. Because the medics didn't know how badly the trooper was injured, they ordered a medical evacuation helicopter. They assumed because the other driver was dead and both vehicles were obviously totaled, the trooper's injuries must be serious. In fact, the only injuries they found

were a small bruise on the side of his head, where he must have hit the side window frame, and bruises on his palms where he'd tightened his grip on the steering wheel. It was a firm grip, too, because the wheel was bent on both sides. The trooper woke up in the hospital, where he was kept overnight for observation. He was released the next day sore, but otherwise unhurt.

Incident 3

A state trooper safety sergeant was towing a trailer eastbound on a two-lane highway at the posted speed limit of 55 mph. On the trailer was a "Seatbelt Convincer" that the sergeant used when instructing civic groups and private companies on traffic safety. The Convincer had a set of twin rails with a seat at the top that locked in place. The seat allowed one or two people to be firmly buckled in by standard automobile seatbelts and shoulder harnesses. Depending on how steeply the sergeant angled the rails, the passengers came down the rails at 2 to 5 mph until they suddenly stopped at the end.

A woman and her friend were traveling in the westbound lane and following another driver who apparently was traveling too slowly for them. As the woman pulled to the left and began to pass the slower vehicle, she noticed the safety sergeant coming at her and tried to quickly swerve back into her lane. The sergeant hit the brakes, but the trailer limited him from doing any evasive maneuvers. Her car skidded sideways in the eastbound lane and was struck on the left-rear fender by the sergeant's car and violently spun counterclockwise.

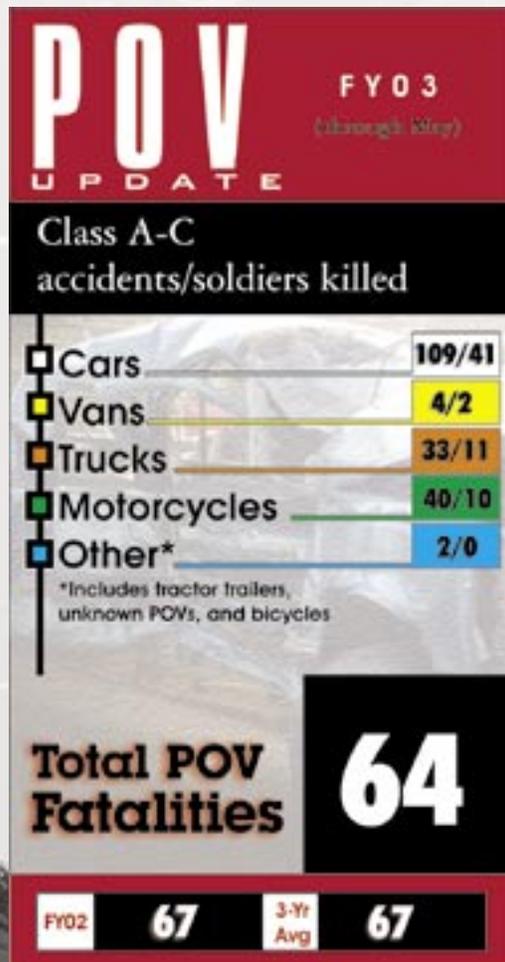
The sergeant, who was uninjured, climbed out of his demolished car and went to see if he could help the two women in their car. The passenger, who was wearing her seatbelt and shoulder harness, was uninjured. The driver, however, was dead. She had her lap belt in place, but had tucked her shoulder harness under her left arm. When her car spun, her body rotated around the improperly worn shoulder harness and she broke her neck.

Six people were involved in three accidents.

The four who survived wore their seatbelts and shoulder harnesses properly. Those who didn't survive either weren't wearing their seatbelts and shoulder harnesses or weren't wearing them properly. The best vehicle safety restraint systems in the world are of no use if people don't use them or use them improperly. As a safety officer in the Army Reserve and a former state trooper, I have seen the results, and they're not pretty. 🚗

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Editor's Note: Do you have a personal experience story where a seatbelt saved your life or the life of someone you know? Why not share it with your fellow soldiers through this magazine? There are three ways you can do that. You can e-mail your story to countermeasure@safetycenter.army.mil, fax it to us at (334) 255-3003, or mail it to us at: U.S. Army Safety Center, Attn: *Countermeasure*, Bldg 4905, 5th Avenue, Fort Rucker, AL 36362-5363.



Vehicle Recalls

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has recently announced the following recalls:

1999-2000 Lincoln Continental. Number potentially involved—43,459. **Defect:** The driver and passenger side air bags could deploy as a result of underbody impacts near the sensors. Such impacts could be caused by pieces of gravel or debris being thrown up from the wheels while the vehicle is being operated at moderate to high speeds or while accelerating. NHTSA Recall No. 03V144, Ford Recall No. 03G01.

2003 Chevrolet Trailblazer, GMC Envoy, Oldsmobile Bravada. Number potentially involved—44,653. **Defect:** Certain sport utility vehicles were built with a circumferential score on the left front brake line. If the brake line were to partially or completely break, front brake performance would be reduced and a crash could occur. NHTSA Recall No. 03V151, GM Recall No. 03025.

1995-1997 Chevrolet Astro, 1996-1997 Chevrolet S10, 1996 Chevrolet Blazer, 1994 Chevrolet Pickup (2WD), 1997 Chevrolet Pickup (2WD), 1994 Chevrolet Pickup (4WD), 1995-1996 Chevrolet Pickup (regular and extended cab), 1995-1997 Chevrolet Pickup (crew cab), 1994-1997 Chevrolet Suburban, 1994-1996 Chevrolet Tahoe, 1996 Oldsmobile Bravada, 1995-1997 GMC Safari, 1996 GMC Sierra, 1996 GMC Jimmy, 1994 GMC Pickup (2WD), 1997 GMC Pickup (2WD), 1995-1996 GMC Pickup (regular and extended cab), 1995-1997 GMC Pickup (crew cab), 1994-1997 GMC Suburban, and 1994-1996 GMC Yukon. Number potentially involved—1,755,876. **Defect:** On certain minivans, pickup trucks, and sport utility vehicles with certain model-engine combinations, the windshield wiper motor could fail due to cracked solder joints on the controller circuit board. If this were to happen, it could cause the windshield wipers to work intermittently or not at all. If this were to occur during bad weather driver visibility would be reduced, which could result in a crash. NHTSA Recall No. 03V159, GM Recall No. 03023.

2003 Kia Sedona. Number potentially involved—3,434. **Defect:** On certain passenger vehicles there was a programming error in the anti-lock braking



system (ABS) electronic control module. The program error could reduce braking force at speeds below 25 mph, which could result in increased stopping distances. Such increased stopping distances could result in a crash. NHTSA Recall No. 03V158.

1994-1995 Nissan Altima. Number potentially involved—190,000. **Defect:** Nissan is recalling these vehicles following reports that passenger air bag deployments have caused a number of moderate to severe eye injuries. Nissan has developed a new passenger air bag that is less powerful when it inflates to reduce the risk of air bag inflation-related injuries. NHTSA Recall No. 03V150.

2000-2003 Subaru Legacy, Outback. Number potentially involved—not provided. **Defect:** Certain rear suspension subframe components were produced with poor paint quality. After continued exposure to corrosive road salts over a period of years, these components could rust-out, resulting in the subframe breaking. If this were to happen while the vehicle was being driven, it could affect vehicle control and increase the risk of a crash. This recall applies to vehicles sold or registered in the following states: Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia. NHTSA recall No. 03V153, Subaru Recall No. WWM-96.

Owners who do not receive a free remedy for these recall defects within a reasonable time should contact the following numbers: Ford, 1-800-392-3673; Chevrolet, 1-800-222-1020; GMC, 1-800-462-8782; Oldsmobile, 1-800-442-6537; Kia, 1-800-222-5500; Nissan, 1-800-647-7261; Subaru, 1-800-782-2783. 



POV

Class A

- SM was killed when the vehicle he was riding in ran off the roadway and overturned, ejecting him. The driver of the vehicle, also an SM, was not injured.

- SM was killed when the vehicle he was riding in struck a barrier in the center of the road and overturned, ejecting both him and the driver. The driver of the vehicle, also an SM, suffered injuries to his head and was hospitalized for 17 days.

- SM was killed in a fatal accident on his way to weekend drill. No other details of the accident were reported.

- SM was killed when he lost control of his motorcycle on a country road.

- SM was killed when the vehicle he was driving ran off the roadway, struck a curb, and crashed into a tree.

- SM suffered a permanent total disability when the driver of the vehicle he was riding in lost control, causing the vehicle to spin and strike a guardrail. SM was paralyzed from the waist down as a result of his injuries. The civilian driver of the vehicle was not injured.

- SM was killed when he lost control of his vehicle after failing to negotiate an exit ramp. SM was ejected as the vehicle went down an embankment, causing the fatal injuries.

- SM was killed when his vehicle collided with a tractor-

trailer, pinning his vehicle under the truck. A fire started after the accident, and SM was fatally injured. The civilian driver of the tractor-trailer was not injured.

Class C

- SM was returning from picking up a parking pass for driving a detail in a 15-passenger van when she was hit by a civilian at an intersection. The civilian driver ran a stop sign at the intersection. SM received minor injuries to her knee in the accident.



AMV

Class A

- SM operating a 5-ton AMV suffered fatal injuries when he swerved the AMV after another vehicle, driven by a foreign national, cut him off. The AMV, which was towing another vehicle in a convoy, struck a median and overturned, killing the driver. The driver of the other vehicle was not injured.

- Three civilian occupants of a POV were killed when their vehicle struck the seventh vehicle in an eight-vehicle convoy.



Personnel Injury

Class A

- SM collapsed during physical training and was taken to the local hospital, where he later died.

- SM, an instructor, was found dead in the drop zone after conducting a routine

training High Altitude Low Opening (HALO) jump with students. SM suffered fractures to his spinal column in the accident.

- SM complained of back pain after completing the Army Physical Fitness Test and was taken to the troop medical clinic (TMC). At the TMC, SM was put on bed rest, but later lost consciousness and died after being evacuated to the local hospital.

Class C

- SM twisted his ankle while running to catch a ball during a basketball game.

- SM suffered fractures to his leg while participating in a company-organized sporting event. SM lost his balance after coming off a soccer ball and, while attempting to prevent the fall, broke his leg. The placement of SM's leg on the ground and the continued movement of his body while his leg stayed stationary caused the injury.



Other

Class C

- An explosion occurred in a nitrocellulose boiling tub house, resulting in damage to the building.

Editor's Note: Because the information published in this section is based upon preliminary accident reports submitted by units, the information is subject to change. For more information on selected accident briefs, call DSN 558-3410, (334-255-3410).

Need a Hand?

You might...

It's not a
keepsake or souvenir.

Think Responsibly, Think Safety



EOD#

Amnesty Location