

# Impact

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**YOU ARE YOUR  
BUDDY'S KEEPER**



**U.S. ARMY**

*Army Non-Tactical Risk-Management Information*



# hey buddy!

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**J**osh Reynolds (not his real name), supervisor for the depot rebuild line, recently returned from a week's vacation in Cancun, Mexico. During his vacation he'd taken a scuba class and experienced firsthand the thrill of diving. He returned from his first

dive amazed at the beauty of the fish and the spectacular coral formations. He also was impressed by the effectiveness of the dive buddy concept. His dive buddy ensured his equipment was operating correctly, and he also stayed close during the dive in case Josh encountered trouble and

needed help getting to the surface.

As Josh settled back into his work routine, he thought about his dive and about the dive buddy concept. He was amazed at how secure and safe he'd felt, even though he didn't have any previous diving experience. He thought that maybe a buddy concept could

make some of his less-experienced workers on the rebuild line feel the same way.

Josh was aware that the depot required a buddy system when employees entered a confined workspace. But he wasn't aware of any effort to expand the buddy system to the more routine depot operations.



Wouldn't a workplace buddy system be a great way for employees to help keep each other safe on the job? Wouldn't a buddy system improve the safety of his rebuild operations?

At the line's quarterly brown bag safety lunch, Josh described the safety buddy concept to his 16 team members. He suggested that a safety buddy could be a second pair of eyes to double-check tedious procedures and ensure they're performed in the correct sequence. The safety buddy also could watch for missed safety procedures or help a co-worker identify a potential hazard.

Almost unanimously, his team agreed the safety buddy concept should be tested for the next three months. The team members agreed to discuss their own safety buddy experiences at the next brown bag lunch. They would then decide if they wanted to make it a permanent part of their safety program.

During the next three months Josh watched for signs that the safety buddy system was effective. During his visits to the shop floor it seemed things were going smoothly, but he was anxious

to get feedback from his employees. As everybody gathered around the break table for lunch, Josh started the quarterly safety meeting by asking for feedback on their three-month test.

Bailey was the first to speak up. He explained his buddy helped protect him from an accident by pointing out that he'd skipped an important step in the fan-test procedure. If his buddy hadn't noticed the fan guard was missing, Bailey might have seriously cut or even amputated a finger. Bailey added it was much easier to accept corrections from a co-worker.

After all, both felt responsible to protect each other as well as achieve team production goals.

Maggie told how her safety buddy helped her remember to use personal protective equipment. One day she'd forgotten to put on her safety glasses and didn't realize it until her safety buddy alerted her. There's no telling how long she might've gone without the safety glasses if her buddy hadn't reminded her.

Tom explained his lower back had been

bothering him for a couple of weeks and that he'd been unable to pinpoint the cause. When his safety buddy was in his area, she noticed him bending over a workbench while making minor adjustments to a control box. She suggested the work area might be too low and helped Tom raise the workbench so he could work more comfortably. The simple change in table height helped, and after a couple of days Tom's back pain was gone. His buddy even called the local safety office to request a more thorough ergonomic

the same message from leadership. Safety became personal because buddies cared about each other and wanted everyone to make it home at the end of the day. The newer employees also benefited as more experienced workers served as their safety buddies and mentors. Everyone on Josh's team liked the safety buddy system, and their number of safety incidents went down during the quarter.

The safety buddy concept definitely had potential, so Josh decided he'd talk about it at the next

His dive buddy ensured his equipment was operating correctly, and he also stayed close during the dive in case Josh encountered trouble and needed help getting to the surface.

review of Tom's workbench.

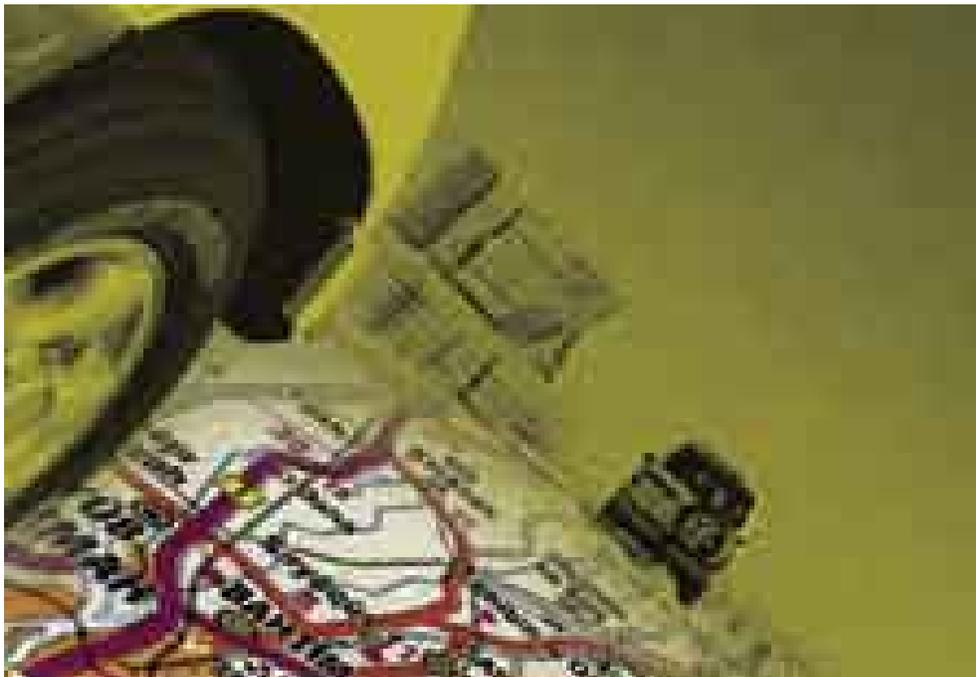
Josh sat back and listened to the success stories. Just as he'd hoped, the safety buddy concept was working. His team members felt responsible for each other's safety, and they also were forging closer bonds together. His team felt having a buddy remind them of a safety oversight was more effective than getting

commander's staff meeting. It had worked for his team, so maybe it could work for the whole depot. It was worth a try. 🙌

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# a long way FROM help

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**few people plan how to take care of themselves or their friends in the aftermath of an accident, especially when traveling in their privately owned vehicles (POVs). Therefore, lessons-learned and the rules that follow tend to be written in blood. Pre-accident plans are no exception.**

It was a sunny day with temperatures in the high 90s, and we had favorable road conditions for our mini-vacation to Jerusalem, Israel. Before beginning, we decided to travel in two separate vehicles just in case one had mechanical trouble. This was good planning, especially as we'd be traveling through sparsely populated areas where we couldn't count on much help.

We were headed back to home station after our two-day "thunder run" through the Holy Land. I was driving the second vehicle of our convoy and had one of my friends riding with me. We were three hours into our trip and had just exited a mountain pass on our way to the Suez Canal. We were cruising downhill at a comfortable 65 mph and chatting on the radios in our sport utility vehicles (SUVs) as we enjoyed the open road.

At the bottom of the mountain we entered a gradual left turn. I noticed a small puff of what looked like smoke behind the lead vehicle. I suddenly realized that what I was seeing was marble-sized gravel that had been poured into our lane all the way around the curve.

I saw the problem in time to react and gradually moved into the oncoming lane, taking my foot off the accelerator to slow down. Unfortunately, the lead vehicle wasn't so lucky. As it entered the turn, it spun counterclockwise and began sliding backwards off the left side of the road. The first thing that went through my mind was, "Oh no—this isn't going to be good!" However, because we weren't going that fast, I figured the worst that would happen is we'd have to dig the vehicle out of the sand.

As it turned out, things were about to get much worse. As the SUV slid off the road it slammed into a large rock with enough force to send the vehicle catapulting end over end. Because of all the sand I can't say how many times the SUV rolled before it landed on its wheels and stopped. However, I remember seeing the front end at least three times as everything from coolers to nativity scenes flew out of the vehicle. When the dirt and debris settled, the scene looked like something from an aircraft accident.

My adrenaline kicked in because I didn't see the driver. I thought he'd been ejected and

that I'd just watched my friend get killed. I came to a screeching halt, then got out and ran to the wreck. My friend was slumped to one side, but I was relieved to find him alive, strapped in by his seatbelt. Our better judgment had prompted us to use our seatbelts, and that decision paid off. Without them, I'm almost certain my friend wouldn't be with us today. What we weren't prepared for was what came next—the much-delayed rescue.

Under the circumstances, we were at least a three-hour drive from the nearest reliable medical assistance. We were in Egypt, and none of us could speak Arabic. I tried to call for help over our radios, but they only had a 10-mile range. My passenger stayed with the injured driver while I left to get help. I knew there was a gas station about 15 miles up the road, so I decided to drive there to use a phone. I arrived there about 20 minutes later only to discover there were no pay phones.

I was going to have

to rely on my ability to convince someone to let me use their cell phone. Even though I didn't speak a lick of Arabic, I didn't have any problems getting someone to lend me their cell phone. I discovered some "unique" communication skills when I opened my wallet and started shelling out cash.

I contacted our site manager and told him about the accident. However, I couldn't explain to him where we were. I knew where I was, but since he didn't travel much he couldn't picture our location. To make things worse he didn't have a map available, so I couldn't use one to explain where we were. We both handed our phones to local nationals who, after about 20 minutes, figured out where I was. Medical support was sent from Cairo, and I raced back to the crash to let my friends know help was coming.

When I arrived, I was relieved to see my friend had gotten out of his vehicle and was sitting on a tire torn off during the crash. He appeared to be in good condition, with only a small spot of blood on the bridge of his nose. We were lucky because it was three hours before medical help arrived.

In Cairo, the doctors

## CONNEXIONS

**For more valuable tips on driving safety, check out the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center's "POV Toolbox" at <https://crc.army.mil>.**

examined my friend and released him. His injuries were limited to a small cut on his nose and a couple of friction burns where the seatbelt had chafed him.

Since this accident, I've taken preparing for road trips much more seriously. Our decision to use two vehicles for the trip had been wise. However, if we hadn't taken enough money



or if the local people hadn't been as helpful, this accident could've been a lot more serious.

As a result of this accident, we've made some new rules for our travel planning. It's now mandatory that we use two vehicles whenever traveling through the desert. Also, everyone, now has a specially marked map so we can identify where people are if they get into trouble. In addition, the unit purchased cell phones for everyone and we now limit our travel to areas where coverage exists. Finally, personnel deploying to our area of operations must attend a driver's training course to learn how to deal with situations like the one we faced.

To this day no one knows why that gravel was on the road. However, that doesn't really matter. What does matter is that we're prepared for the unexpected and know what to do if something goes wrong. It's too late to begin planning how to handle an emergency when you're on a lonely highway with a wrecked vehicle and injured people. Taking the time to plan ahead can save lives—maybe even your own. 🙏

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# after the crash

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**W**e all think a vehicle accident will never happen to us. However, as a former police officer, I'm here to tell you that vehicle accidents are a daily occurrence. Even the most experienced and careful driver will almost certainly have an accident sometime in their life. While you may not always be able to avoid a crash, there are several things you can do to prepare yourself for what happens afterwards.

## Carry the following:

- Current vehicle registration and proof of insurance.
- List of allergies, medicines, or special medical conditions.
- Up-to-date emergency contact telephone numbers.
- First aid kit.
- Telephone number for the towing service you'd prefer to use.

## At the accident site:

- Call for police assistance.
- Request medical assistance if injuries are involved.
- Provide basic first aid, but refrain from moving anyone who is injured.
- If the vehicles are

operable, move them to the road's shoulder.

- Never leave the accident scene.
- Get the police officer's name, badge number, address, and telephone number, in addition to the case and report numbers.
- Make a note of the accident date, time, direction of travel, location, weather, and road conditions.

By having the above items available and knowing what to do after an accident, you can make a stressful situation more bearable and, hopefully, less costly.

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# the TROOPER'S Last Ride

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It was a Labor Day weekend when a couple of young paratroopers listening to the radio heard that Mars was closer to the earth than it had been in many years. They'd been drinking for about six hours when they decided the drop zone would be the best place to observe Mars.

On the way out of the barracks they spotted a fellow paratrooper and asked if she wanted to join

them. She agreed, and they drove off to the drop zone. Upon arriving, they all drank for a couple of hours as they watched the beautiful southern skies.

The three left the drop zone just before sunrise and were speeding down a road when the driver lost control of his Mustang convertible on a sharp curve. The car skidded out of control, began rolling over, and missed a cinderblock range building by less than a

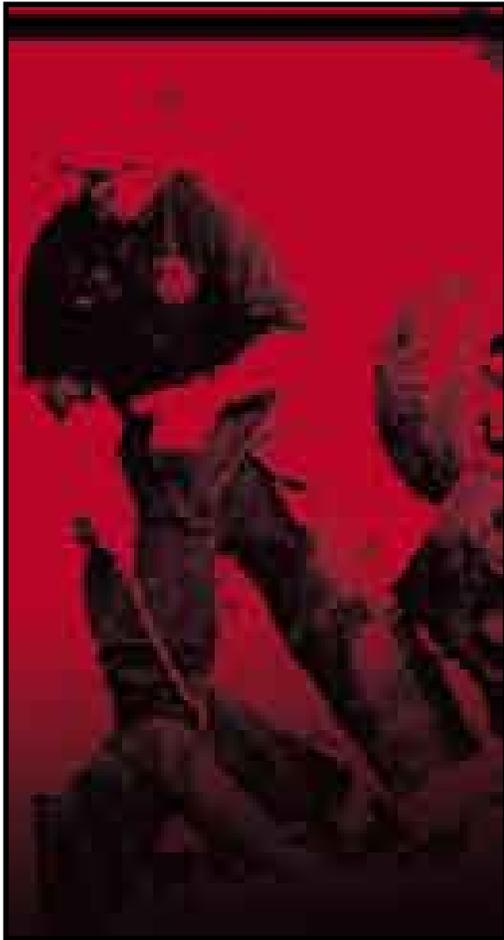
foot. The driver wasn't wearing his seatbelt and was thrown from the car on the first roll. The Mustang rolled over at least two more times—ultimately going more than 800 feet. The paratrooper in the front passenger seat was wearing her seatbelt and stayed inside the vehicle. The paratrooper in the backseat was unbelted and lying with his feet stretched out on the center console. He was fortunate that the

rollover forces pinned him where he was. When the Mustang stopped rolling, he jumped out and called 911.

All three paratroopers were air evacuated to Fort Bragg's Womack Army Medical Center. While both passengers walked away with minor injuries, the driver wasn't so fortunate. He was pronounced dead later that morning.

The driver's careless actions not only affected





his family, they affected the two Soldiers in his car and the Soldiers in his unit. A battle buddy was lost—a highly trained Soldier who wouldn't be there for his buddies in the future when he was needed. Yes, the unit could replace him with a new Soldier, but they couldn't replace his skills and experience. And then there was the personal side for those who rode with him that night. The young female Soldier in the front seat will never forget watching the driver crawl back to the vehicle and slowly die from internal injuries.

And the lessons learned? When it comes to alcohol, no one is “bulletproof” ... not even paratroopers. Alcohol is particularly dangerous because it first attacks the part of your brain used for critical thinking, dulling your sense of judgment. What you might call “loosening up” is the breaking down of your ability to recognize and properly respond to things around you—including hazards. When that happens,

you're impaired even if you're still steady enough to shoot a game of pool or drive a car. Remember—you're not impaired when your body starts stumbling; you're impaired when your judgment starts stumbling.

Also, if you're a passenger you're responsible to protect yourself by not riding with a driver who's been drinking. Why put your life in the hands of someone who's already taking needless, dangerous risks? And your responsibility extends to everyone else in the vehicle—including the driver. If you'd warn your buddies of an ambush in Iraq, why wouldn't you warn them of the dangers of drinking and driving? Your buddy is your buddy 24/7—no matter where you are. In this Army, real buddies keep buddies from driving drunk. ☒

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# hot FUN at the WATER PARK

**I**t was a typical summer day in northern California, with temperatures forecast above 105 degrees. I was starting my first day as a lifeguard at a brand-new waterslide park. I thought nothing of the fact that, as a lifeguard, I would be required to stand poolside without shade. We were given a break every two hours so we and the ride operators could get some much-needed water. Having worked all day in the summer sun, I left the park sore, tired, and suffering from a pounding headache. After spending a few minutes inside an air-conditioned house and drinking some water, I felt much better.

MARK GETTEL  
CP-12 Safety Intern

When I showed up at the park the following morning, workers were installing chairs, shade umbrellas, and 5-gallon water containers at all the pools. Curious about the changes, I asked a co-worker what was up with the chairs and umbrellas. He explained that one of the ride operators at the top of the slide complex had collapsed from heat stroke after I'd left the previous evening. Inquiring further, I found out the operator was immediately given first aid and quickly transported to a hospital. He would recover fully.

Heat illness is a major cause of preventable death

worldwide and, of course, is much more of a problem in areas with warm climates. Heat stroke, the most severe form of heat illness, can quickly lead to death as the thermoregulatory system shuts down and the body overheats. Death rates for those suffering heat stroke are significantly higher when treatment is delayed for more than two hours. The ride operator at the park was extremely fortunate that he received immediate help when he first became ill.

The water park's management initially failed to recognize heat as a hazard for the employees.

As a result, they failed to implement controls such as providing shade umbrellas, chairs, and water coolers at work stations until they had an injury. On their first day of operation they failed to manage risk and an employee was hospitalized. Once they assessed the hazards and implemented controls, they fixed their problem. During the following 100 days not a single employee suffered a heat injury—proof that the controls were working. 

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# Heat Stroke

*Here's some background information on heat stroke to help you recognize its cause and symptoms and also how to care for someone suffering heat stroke.*



## Cause

- Prolonged exposure to high temperatures and failure of the body's cooling mechanism.

## Symptoms

- Mental confusion or disorientation.
- Throbbing headache; flushed, dry skin; nausea; and elevated body temperature.
- Not sweating, despite the heat.

## First Aid

- Heat stroke is a medical emergency and can lead to death. Get the victim to a medical facility as soon as possible.

- Start first aid immediately. Move the victim into the shade, loosen their clothing, and cool them with ice packs.
- If ice packs are not available, soak or douse the victim with cool water. DO NOT immerse the victim in ice water.
- Have the victim lie down and elevate their feet.
- If the victim is conscious, give them sips of cool water. Don't give water to an unconscious victim.
- Keep the victim cool as you transport them to a medical facility.
- If possible, measure body temperature. If you've been actively cooling the victim and their temperature stays above 100 degrees, get them to the hospital immediately.
- Assess the victim's mental status every few minutes by asking them questions such as "What's your name?" and "Do you know where you are?"

# get Fit to Fight safely

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**E**xercise is an essential part of an overall fitness plan and offers many benefits. Among these benefits are increased strength and endurance, improved muscle tone and flexibility, stress relief, and a sense of well-being. Here are some basic rules for exercising safely that you might want to consider for your personal exercise plan.

- Start slowly and work up to your goal over a reasonable period of time. When starting an exercise program, it's important to not do too much too fast. Working with a trainer at the post gym or local health club can help you set and reach realistic goals. It's also always a good idea to check with your health care professional before starting any new exercise regime.

- Exercise with a buddy. Working out with a buddy is not only an effective motivator, it also provides security. Should one of you be injured, the other can help or seek assistance. If you're unable to run or walk with a buddy, select highly populated, well-lit areas for exercising or use an area designated for exercise. It's always a good idea to let a family member or friend know where you plan to be.

- Stay alert to your surroundings and maintain situational awareness. Wearing headphones can block out important sounds and distract you from what's going on around you. On many Army posts, wearing headphones anywhere

but inside the gym or on an enclosed track is prohibited.

- When crossing the street, don't step from the curb until you've made eye contact with the drivers around you. Even though pedestrians have the right-of-way in a crosswalk, they inevitably lose when competing with a car. Stay aware of traffic and avoid jogging or running during peak traffic hours.

- Run on the shoulder facing traffic.

- Obey traffic signs and signals.

- Make sure others can see you. Wear a reflective belt or vest over light-colored clothing and carry a flashlight from dusk to dawn. If drivers can't see you, they can't avoid you.

- Carry personal information including the person to contact in an emergency, your blood type, and a list of any medications you take.

- Remember to keep yourself hydrated, pay attention to your nutritional status, and wear clothing appropriate for the activity and climate.

Have fun and stay fit!

*Editor's Note: Judy Zeiger has 20 years' experience as a health care worker.*

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**There were 70,000 pedestrians injured in traffic crashes in 2004. On average, a pedestrian is injured in a traffic crash every 8 minutes and one is killed every 111 minutes.**

# Falling headlong into trouble

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**n**ot getting injured or killed in an on-duty accident is a big deal in the Army, whether you're a Soldier or civilian. But what about when the workday ends or the weekend arrives? What about when you're at home digging into your list of repair projects?

One Saturday I watched my neighbor, Larry Streeter, lay out his drop cloths, set up his extension ladder, and then set out his rollers, brushes, and paint cans. He looked carefully at what he needed to do and then extended his ladder to its full 24-foot height. While he was climbing the first few rungs, I walked over to visit with him. As we struck up a conversation, he came down his shaky ladder, which was sitting on unstable ground.

I noticed his extension ladder wasn't long enough to stick up at least three feet above the roof's edge. I raised the subject of his extension ladder being too short for safety. I said, "You know, if you climb up that far you won't have anything to grasp onto. Would you like to borrow my 30-foot extension ladder?" He declined my offer and

said he'd be done in a couple of hours.

Before leaving to run some errands in town, I explained the four-to-one rule to Larry. That rule says for every four feet in height you should move the bottom of the ladder one foot away from the base of the wall. This creates a 75-degree angle between the ground and the ladder, making the ladder much more stable and safe. I pointed out to Larry that he needed to move the ladder's feet about seven feet from the side of his house, and I then moved the ladder so he could see what I was talking about. I also talked to him about the importance of not reaching out too far from either side of the ladder. I stressed that his belt buckle should remain between the vertical rails.

When I left, I noticed Larry had

rearranged his ladder back to the way he'd set it up before I talked to him. He didn't seem at all concerned about his safety as he climbed the ladder and began painting.

When I returned, several emergency vehicles were blocking our street. Larry had reached out too far from the top rung and fallen to his death. There was nothing for him to grab onto when he started to fall, and his wife watched in horror as he fell onto the concrete driveway. He died of head injuries. It was an unnecessary death.

Larry's accident was by no means uncommon. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), more than 164,000 Americans are seen in emergency rooms every year because of ladder accidents. Most of those injuries and deaths are the result of falls like the one that killed Larry. 🚫

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### The following CPSC safety tips are designed to keep you from becoming a statistic.

- Don't exceed your ladder's maximum load rating.
- Inspect the ladder before using it. Look for loose or damaged parts.
- Never allow more than one person at a time to be on a ladder.
- Make sure the ladder extends at least three feet above the roofline or working surface.
- Never stand on the top three rungs of a straight, single, or extension ladder.
- Make sure your ladder has slip-resistant feet.
- Never use a metal ladder around electrical equipment. Never allow any ladder to contact live electrical wires.
- Be sure the locks on your extension ladder are properly engaged before climbing the ladder.
- The ground beneath the ladder should be firm and level. If it isn't, you can

place large wooden boards beneath the ladder to help level it and keep it stable.

- Don't place a ladder in front of a door or gate that isn't locked, blocked, or guarded.
- Keep your body centered between the ladder's rails at all times. Don't reach way out to the side to get to an object—move the ladder closer instead.
- Straight, single, or extension ladders should be set up at a 75-degree angle. You can figure that out by using the four-to-one rule.
- Don't use a ladder for any purpose other than that for which it was intended.
- Don't step on the top step or bucket shelf. Also, don't attempt to climb the back side of a stepladder.
- Never leave a raised ladder unattended.
- Read and follow the ladder's instruction label.



# board meeting

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**I**t's 4:30 on a Thursday afternoon before a four-day weekend, and your Soldiers are assembled in formation for their safety briefing. They've had a good week and are ready for a well-deserved break. The commander begins the brief and covers all the topics he thinks are critical.

Unfortunately, not everyone is listening. Many Soldiers are

looking at their watches, anxious to jump in their cars and take off. Engines are revving in the distance as impatient spouses attempt to "encourage" the commander to speak faster. They don't mean any disrespect, but they're ready to get on the road. Several Soldiers are daydreaming and planning the weekend's events. They hear the commander talking but aren't really listening. After all, he

tells them the same thing every weekend. They're convinced an accident won't happen to them. Besides, the commander isn't even talking about the things they'll be doing this weekend. He's harping on drinking and driving, but some of them plan to go out on a party boat. They won't be driving—so what's the worry? They're thinking about the great time they're going to have!

Does any of this sound familiar to you? It does to me! It's a difficult task to think of new ways to keep Soldiers interested during safety briefings. It is even more difficult to prevent yourself from sounding like a recording droning over and over again in the ears of your Soldiers. Here are a few things you may want to consider next time you prepare for a weekend safety briefing:

- Try doing your safety briefing at the beginning of the day—maybe at the first work-call formation or after physical training has ended. Why? It avoids the “let's get this over with” attitude at the day's end when Soldiers are itching to leave. At the end of the day, they have a limited attention span and even more limited

patience. Also, if you talk to Soldiers in the morning, it gets them thinking about weekend safety all day long.

- Ask Soldiers throughout the day what they heard, what they remember, and what they might do during the weekend. This provides you an opportunity to see what they learned and reinforce what they missed or didn't understand.

- Use the day to find out what your Soldiers will be doing during the weekend. That'll give you an opportunity to review their plans, provide feedback, and make any needed adjustments without making them jump through hoops at the end of the day. We'd like to think we're talking to our Soldiers throughout the week and know their weekend plans. The reality is we're typically

so busy we don't find out what they're doing until the last minute.

- Try using a briefing card to list all the critical topics you want to discuss so you don't leave anything out. You can also provide a copy of the card to Soldiers as a safety reminder.

Many of these ideas may not be new to you—you may have even thought about them before but never tried them. There's no way to be certain how many injuries or deaths safety briefings have prevented. The one thing that is certain is that Soldiers are the most important part of any organization. Anything that will protect them or save their lives is worth trying! 🙌

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## **E**ditor's Note:

*My eyes popped open wide as I read the accident report. A young, barefoot woman was mowing her lawn when she tripped and fell backwards. Unfortunately, she pulled the still-running mower over her bare feet. The report said she suffered a “partial avulsion” of her big toe. I had no idea what “avulsion” meant, so I looked it up in the dictionary. The best description would be to imagine what your toe would look like if you stuck it in your garbage disposal and flipped the switch. The report didn’t mention whether or not she was now counting fractions on her toes. But it’s safe to say she wouldn’t have to worry about doing that nail for a very long time. Since the goal of mowing is to shorten the grass—not your toes—consider the following tips before firing up your mower.*

### **Before mowing the lawn:**

- Make sure the mower is in good working order. If the mower has been sitting all winter, check the oil level, air filter, and spark plug. Follow the starting instructions in the operator’s manual and, if it still doesn’t start, take the mower to a repair shop to have it tuned up or fixed.

if any, protection to your feet. Wear long pants to protect your legs, and wear a good pair of wrap-around safety glasses to protect your eyes. Even though lawn mowers have mufflers, hearing protection is a good idea. Always mow when there is sufficient daylight so you can see anything that

# CUTTING UP

- Check the blade to ensure it’s sharp and undamaged. A damaged blade that comes out of balance can break and fly from beneath the mower.
  - Before mowing your lawn, remove objects such as rocks, sticks, balls, pet toys, and other items the mower could pick up and throw from beneath the carriage. At full throttle, a mower can fling objects at speeds as high as 200 mph. Never allow the discharge chute to point at anyone while mowing.
  - Dress properly for the job. Wear heavy-duty shoes with non-slip soles. Avoid wearing tennis shoes or other canvas or cloth-top shoes because they provide little,

might be in your path. If you live in a hot climate, mow early in the morning after the dew has evaporated but the temperature is still cool.

- Make sure the grass is dry. Wet or damp grass can clog the mower, not to mention increase your risk of slipping and falling.
- Disconnect the spark plug before placing your hands under the mower to clear grass or deal with other problems. Some people who’ve failed to do this have accidentally started the mower while turning the blade to clear an obstruction.
- Check the gas and oil. Gas that has sat in the fuel tank all winter should be drained and replaced. Check





**Every year more than 11,000 Americans are treated in hospital emergency rooms for injuries from power lawn mowers, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.**

the oil level to make sure it's within proper limits. Refer to your owner's manual for how often the oil should be changed. Make sure the emergency stop or shutoff switch is working properly. NEVER tape it down so the engine will run when you release the shutoff lever or switch.

#### **Let the cutting begin:**

- Start the mower in a safe area away from children, other adults, and pets. Look a few feet ahead of the mower to spot any items still loose in the grass.
- With push mowers, mow across hills or slopes—not up and down them—to reduce your chances of slipping or falling. However, the opposite is true with riding mowers. Cut up and down the slope to reduce the danger of tipping over sideways.
- Don't refuel a hot mower; instead, let it cool down for 20 minutes or longer to avoid an accidental fire. Also, because gas expands in heat, only fill the gas tank three-quarters full.
- Make sure the wheels roll easily and are secured properly.
- Make sure the throttle moves freely throughout its full range of movement. Adjust it, or have it adjusted, if needed.
- Make sure the guards are in place to prevent objects from flying out from beneath the mower. If the guards are missing or damaged, **DON'T USE THE MOWER!**
- Never allow children to use the mower, and carefully supervise inexperienced operators.

#### **Cleanup chores:**

- Allow the mower to cool for at least 20 minutes before doing any maintenance.
- Disconnect the spark plug wire and clean the mower of dirt or grass.
- Once the mower has cooled, check the oil and refuel with gas. Store the gas in a proper container well away from living areas. 

**Information for this article was contributed by Safety Intern Anthony Padilla and also taken from the Consumer Product Safety Commission's Web site at <http://www.cpsc.gov/>.**

# JOE SNUFFY'S NOT-SO-EXCELLENT ADVENTURE

**BOB VAN ELSBERG**  
Managing Editor

**P**VI “Joe Snuffy”—the Army’s most fumble-prone Soldier—has been busy this spring. And, sure ‘nuff, he’s popped up in our accident reports, so we’re gonna tell it like it is and let the chips fall where they may.

You have to admire the strength, balance, and control of bicycle motocross (BMX) racers. Snuffy admired BMX racers—so much that he just itched to get some “air” time himself. He had one of the ingredients—a BMX bicycle—but, dang it, the Army didn’t put a BMX track on the fourth floor of his barracks. Not to worry.

Where there’s a will, there’s a way (maybe in Snuffy’s case, he needs a will before he finds a way).

All true competitors prepare themselves before facing a challenge. Some push themselves hard to develop their strength; others have special diets. Snuffy fell into the latter category, subscribing to the well-known 80-proof liquid diet. This diet is renowned for its ability to boost confidence while allaying fears of serious and imminent bodily danger. It was just what Snuffy needed as he

straddled his BMX bike on the top landing and contemplated his descent down four flights of stairs.

His courage sufficiently boosted, Snuffy grabbed the handlebars and began pedaling. “Ker-thunk ... ker-thunk ... ker-thunk” went his tires as they bounced off the stairs. The rhythm picked up nicely as Snuffy’s bike—

## CONNECTIONS

Snuffy didn’t get a very good start with BMX—but you can do better. If you’d like to learn about BMX and how to safely participate in the sport, check out the following Web site: [www.bellflowerbmx.com/bmx-tips-racing-overview.htm](http://www.bellflowerbmx.com/bmx-tips-racing-overview.htm).

with the able assistance of gravity—accelerated. However, as anyone who’s

ever descended several flights of stairs knows, there are some turns involved. It's an engineering requirement.

This is where Snuffy ran afoul of the laws of physics. You see, once an object starts going in a direction it just naturally wants to keep going that way. Making the turn for the next flight of stairs required both traction and a fine sense of balance. Unfortunately, it's hard to get much traction when you're bouncing down stairs. And, while Snuffy's diet "inflated" his courage at the top of the stairs, on the way down it deflated his fine motor skills.

A skid here—a bounce there—and then gravity completed the ensemble and sent Snuffy head-first into the stair rail. Lucky for Snuffy he had such a hard head, because he hadn't bothered with a helmet. The knock to his noggin sent him to the hospital for a day, followed by 14 days' restricted duty. However, his head didn't hurt nearly as bad as his backside when his CO got hold of it. After a discussion involving the Uniform Code of Military Justice, Snuffy departed anatomically incapable of sitting on anything.

When it comes to BMX, Snuffy gets an "A" for effort, but an "F" for execution. BMX bikes are a lot better in the dirt than on barracks stairs. It's also a good idea to include proper protective equipment—in this case a helmet would've been helpful. Finally, whoever first mixed the words "recreational" and "drinking" forgot to mention the final ingredient—"recuperating." 🚲

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# a memorial day to remember

JOSE MORENO  
CP-12 Safety Intern

It was Memorial Day weekend 1983 and I was a 21-year-old infantry squad leader at Fort Campbell, Ky., home of the 101st Airborne Division. As the weekend began, I and two other squad leaders from my unit decided to go to a local camping area and spend the weekend fishing. We planned to leave Friday evening and return Monday. That way we could rest before returning to work Tuesday morning. At that time the Army didn't require Soldiers to conduct risk assessments before going on leave or pass. In fact, I can't recall ever having a safety

brief before a long weekend back then.

That Friday afternoon we packed my car with food and drove to the local Class Six store, where we purchased our favorite alcoholic beverages. We then headed out of town but got caught up in heavy traffic. Seeing a bar alongside the road, we decided to stop and have a drink while waiting for the traffic to clear. All three of us were heavy drinkers, so it wasn't unusual for us to get drunk. After all, we were young, tough, and "invincible." We entered the bar, ordered some drinks, and began

playing pool. Well, you know the rest of the story—one beer led to another and before we realized it, it was 9 p.m. By then we all were drunk and anxious to continue our trip.

We left the bar and drove to our camping area, mixing drinks along the way. We arrived at our campsite after midnight and drank until we all passed out around 5 or 6 a.m. We woke up about 9 a.m., started our day by eating breakfast, and then fished until just after noon. The fish weren't biting, so we started drinking again and sang along with one of my friends who'd brought

**About three in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives.**



his guitar. We also talked about family and future. We stayed up drinking all night and were very drunk when, at 4 a.m., one of my friends suggested we head back to Fort Campbell early. All three of us agreed that sounded like a great idea—despite our being drunk. We decided to take turns driving and stop for breakfast along the way. We then loaded the car and I began the drive back to Fort Campbell.

I'd been driving on a winding road for about 30 minutes when I fell asleep at the wheel. When I woke up, we'd gone off the road and were plowing through bushes and small trees. The car flew into the air for a short distance and struck a large culvert under a driveway.

I must've been knocked unconscious because the next thing I remember was waking up to the screams of my front-seat passenger. He was leaning against me and yelling, "I can't see!" I looked at him and saw dried blood in his eyes, which kept him from opening them. When I reached over and cleaned off the dried blood, I saw he'd hit his face on the windshield and slammed his knees into the glove compartment. He hadn't been wearing his seatbelt. There was a gash over his left eye, and blood was coming from his mouth and the back of his head. Fortunately, he was still alert. I quickly removed my shirt and attempted to stop the bleeding while trying to keep him awake.

I looked in the backseat, where my other friend was holding his forehead. I reached back to look at his face and noticed a long cut on his forehead. During the crash he'd struck his head on one of

the guitar strings, which cut him. I also could see he was missing a few teeth and bleeding from the mouth. He hadn't been wearing his seatbelt either. I tore off a piece of his shirt to use as a makeshift bandage and told him to keep pressure on his head wound.

I was having trouble breathing. I'd worn my seatbelt, but there was a large bruise on my chest. I'd been hit by the steering wheel, which had been pushed



**In 2003, 30 percent of all fatal crashes during the week were alcohol-related, compared to 53 percent on weekends. For all crashes, the alcohol involvement rate was 5 percent during the week and 12 percent during the weekend.**

back by the impact. I don't know how much time passed after the crash before I got out the driver's side window to look for help. I ran to a nearby house and knocked until an old man came to the door. I told him about the accident, and he called for an ambulance. We were in a rural area and it took about 45 minutes for the ambulance to arrive.

I returned to the car to help my friends. By the time I got to them they'd both gotten out of the car. My friend who'd been in the front seat was complaining of pain in the back of his head. I wiped the blood from the wound and noticed two teeth protruding from his scalp—teeth that belonged to my friend who'd been in the backseat. Soon the ambulance arrived and took us to the hospital at Fort Campbell.

We were all hospitalized for a few days and then released to our units.

That was 22 years ago, but I still remember the accident as if it were yesterday. And while I haven't talked to the other guys involved in years, I'm sure they still think about it too. They'll always have the scars to remind them.

The three of us were very lucky that Memorial Day weekend. After the accident

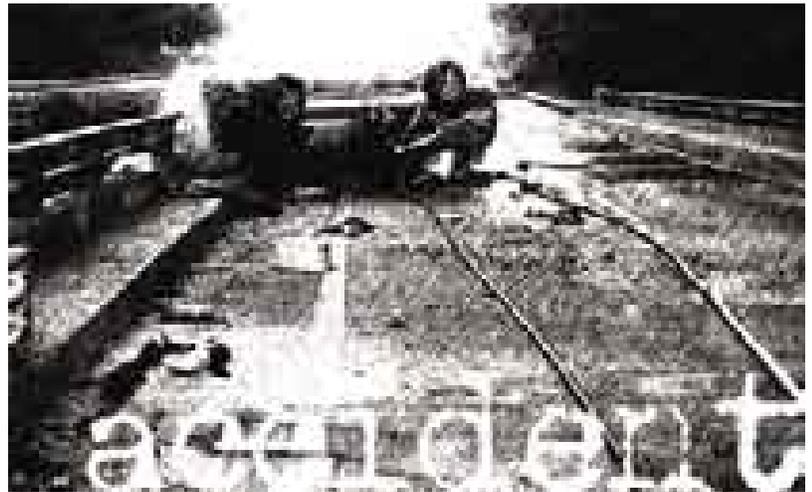
we all vowed to never drink and drive again. I've kept that vow until this day. It's easy when you're young to take life for granted—that is, until something like this happens. That's when you realize you're not quite as invincible as you think.

Memorial Day isn't just a time for remembering fallen Soldiers. It's also a time for remembering how important you, a living Soldier, are to your family, friends, unit, and Army. And never forget, in this time of war you are America's MOST valuable asset. 🇺🇸

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# BRIEFS

The following reports reflect accidents that have happened to Soldiers in their privately owned vehicles, during recreational activities, and in other non-tactical environments.



## POV

### Class A

- A Soldier was fatally injured when he lost control of his motorcycle while making a turn, crossed the center lane, ran off the road, and struck a light pole.

- One Soldier was

driving and another riding as a passenger when their vehicle ran off the road, struck a fire hydrant, and overturned. Both Soldiers were killed in the crash. The driver reportedly was speeding when he lost control.

- Two Soldiers were killed when

their vehicle ran off the road and collided with a retaining wall. The driver apparently attempted a turn at excessive speed. Neither Soldier was wearing their seatbelt.

(Preliminary Loss Report 0523 stated the Soldiers had only recently completed basic training and AIT. Also, the driver had

purchased the car only two days before the accident.)

- A Soldier was operating a motorcycle with his wife as passenger when they struck a civilian vehicle backing out of a driveway. The Soldier and his wife were killed in the accident.

- A Soldier was killed while riding as a passenger in a vehicle operated by a drunk driver. The drunk driver struck an abandoned car on an interstate. Neither the Soldier nor the civilian driver was wearing seatbelts.

- A Soldier suffered fatal injuries when the vehicle she was operating crossed the centerline and collided head-on with another vehicle. The Soldier reportedly was speeding.

- A Soldier was killed when the vehicle he was operating left the roadway and overturned. The Soldier was thrown from the vehicle and died of head injuries.

- A Soldier was operating his motorcycle when he “laid” his bike down to avoid a collision with a pickup truck. The Soldier was not wearing a helmet and

struck his head on the pickup’s bumper, which caused fatal injuries.

- A Soldier was killed when he stopped to help a stranded motorist and another vehicle came over a hill and struck him.

- Two Soldiers, one the driver and the other the passenger, died when their vehicle ran off the road, struck a bridge pylon, and exploded. The driver reportedly was speeding.

- A Soldier riding as a passenger in an automobile operated by a civilian died when the vehicle ran off the road struck a tree. The civilian driver reportedly was speeding.

- A Soldier riding as a passenger in an automobile operated by a civilian died when the driver ran off the road, overcorrected,

ran across the road, hit a guardrail, and overturned.

- A Soldier reportedly was riding his all-terrain vehicle (ATV) at a high rate of speed when he hit a culvert, was thrown from the ATV, and suffered fatal injuries. The report did not mention if the Soldier was wearing a helmet or any other personal protective equipment.

- A Soldier was killed when he lost control of his vehicle and ran off the road.

## **Personnel Injury Class C**

- While playing basketball a Soldier stepped between two other Soldiers’ feet and rolled her right ankle. The Soldier was unable to move her ankle, which immediately began swelling. She was taken to an emergency room for further

evaluation and was told to report to sick call on Monday. She reported to sick call and was placed on four days’ quarters while her X-rays were sent to a medical center for further evaluation.

- A Soldier was told to carry linen bundles to a cargo van waiting beneath the company breezeway. The Soldier was loading a bundle of linens into the van when she lost her balance on a patch of ice and fell, injuring her arm. She was transported to a hospital emergency room and had surgery on her broken arm. She was hospitalized for two days, lost 60 workdays, and was placed on 30 days of restricted duty. ❌

**E**ver have trouble keeping your campfire burning as brightly as you'd like? You poke around trying to rearrange the wood to burn better, but it just doesn't quite take. Well, you could read your kid's Boy Scout manual for tips, or—like the young man in this story sent in by safety intern Mike Bradford—you could take a more direct and dramatic approach.

It was the summer of 2001 and I'd taken my family to the mountains for our annual vacation. We ended up camping in a recreational vehicle (RV) park not far from Yellowstone National Park. It was our first night there and we'd set up our tent in a campsite on the far end of the park. Having finished supper, I put my son down to sleep. Then my wife and I settled into our camp chairs to enjoy the sunset and campfire.

The sky began darkening as the sun slowly dipped behind the mountains. As we savored the last remaining orange rays of sunlight, our tranquility was suddenly interrupted by a brilliant flash to our left. (Hmm...it couldn't be sunrise—the sun only just set!) Just at that

## the Rambo Flambeau

moment I heard a young woman pleading with someone to “drop and roll!” As I jumped out of my seat and raced across the dry grass, I could see three distinct fires. I couldn't tell how bad the situation was, so I yelled out “fire, fire, fire...call 911!”

When I got to the scene, I found a long-haired young man in his early 20s wearing a polyester football jersey, blue jeans, and only ONE high-top basketball shoe. The other shoe was doing its best imitation of a flaming marshmallow not far from a burning can of white gas. The

bonfire, which apparently had been dwindling, was now burning impressively in the fire pit.

I could see my vacation going up in flames, so my first priority was to see if the three fires were spreading. They appeared to be contained, but the young man was frantically looking for a bucket of water to throw onto the flaming can of gas. I convinced him that was a bad idea and suggested we use sand or dirt instead. The young woman I'd heard earlier was frantically pacing back and forth in front of a cabin as she watched

the flaming gas can. She quickly explained that children from several families were sleeping inside the wooden cabin. The cabin had one door, and the flaming gas can was only a few feet away from it. Fortunately, we were able to gather enough dirt to extinguish the burning can and shoe before the fire spread.

My next priority was to determine if anyone was injured. The young man seemed to be going 110 mph, so I asked him to sit down and show me his leg. He kept trying to tell me he was fine and that all he wanted was



another beer to drink and some butter to put on his skin. When I looked at his leg, I could tell where his sock line was because it was the dividing point between skin and red meat. It appeared to me the fire had shot up his pant leg to the knee line, and an 8- to 10-inch-long blister had just popped on his calf.

The young lady ran to the swimming pool to alert the other adults from the family. They soon arrived and took control of the young man. Deciding he needed medical attention, they loaded him into a car and took him to a local hospital.

So how did all this come about? As it turned out, the young man had been drinking beer all day when he decided the campfire needed some “juice.” He looked around, spotted a can of white gas and began pouring it onto the fire. Sure ‘nuff—that got the bonfire (we’ll call it “fire number one”) going good! In fact, so good it went looking for the source as fast as it could!

As the fire traveled up the stream of fuel to the can, the young man realized he was now holding his very own personal firebomb. With fire number two at his fingertips and recognizing he was moments away from being “extra crispy,” he turned and swung the can to toss it away. Unfortunately, gravity, aerodynamics and lousy aim all conspired against him. As he was turning, burning fuel dribbled onto one of his shoes, igniting fire number three. Thus distracted, he forgot to aim before tossing the can, which spewed fire like a mythical dragon as it arced through the air and landed near the cabin.

He somehow managed to get his flaming shoe off without igniting his hair or polyester football jersey. Fortunately, he didn’t score a direct hit on the cabin or burn down the campground. However, it wasn’t for lack of trying. Luckily, nobody died this time. But luck is a poor substitute for proper planning. Here are a few campfire tips to keep your vacation from going in

flames:

- Store flammable fluids only in proper containers a safe distance from your tent, camper, or any source of heat or open flame.
- Don’t use flammable liquid to start a fire.
- Don’t pour flammable liquid onto a smoldering fire.
- Many insect repellents are flammable, so be extra careful when using them around a fire.
- Build your campfire where it can’t spread. Never leave a burning fire unattended. Put it out with water and soil and be extra careful on windy days.
- Clear at least a three-foot area around campfire rings of leaves, dry grass, and pine needles.
- Don’t wear loose-fitting clothing around a fire.
- Teach and practice the “stop, drop, and roll” method of putting out a clothing fire. 

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