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In this issue...

'Tis the Season to Put Safety at the Top of Your Holiday List

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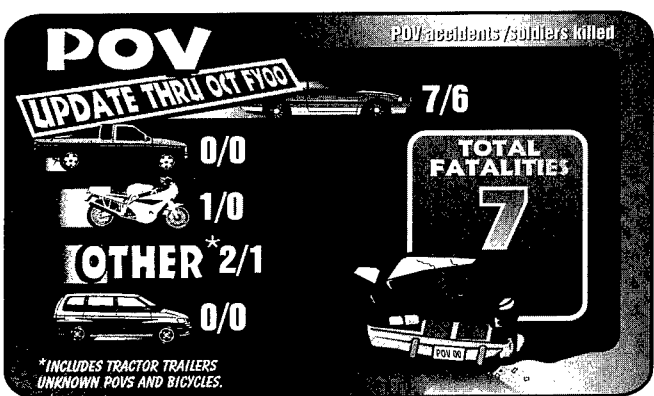
COUNTERMEASURE

The Official Safety Magazine for Army Ground Risk-Management

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Gene M. LaCoste

Gene M. LaCoste

From the Editor

The holidays are a joyful time of the year as we gather with our families and friends. Often, our lives become very hectic as the season approaches, and it's easy to overlook common safety precautions. Just as there are safety rules and precautions to help you on duty, there are also safety guidelines to help you through the holidays while off duty. As joyous as the season is, we must remember to keep our guard up when it comes to accident prevention. So, as you're making your holiday list, put safety at the top.

Holiday Safety List

- Smoke detectors
- Fire extinguisher
- Christmas tree
- Lights and decorations
- Fireplace
- Parties and alcohol
- Holiday blues

Smoke Detectors and Fire Extinguishers

If you don't have these essential lifesaving devices, put them at the top of your shopping list. Smoke detectors should be installed on each floor of your home and outside each bedroom. Avoid placing smoke detectors in the kitchen, where false alarms are common. Test your smoke detectors at least once a month, and replace their batteries once a year. Make sure every member of your household knows what the smoke detector alarm sounds like and what to do if there is a fire. Also, buy a fire extinguisher for your home and make a habit of inspecting it on a regular basis.

Christmas Trees

Christmas trees are one of the most popular traditions of the season—and one of the most dangerous. Whether you choose a live tree or an artificial one, there are certain precautions that must be followed.

Freshness is the most important safety factor. The higher the moisture content, the less likely the tree is to dry out and become a fire hazard. The best way to ensure a tree is fresh is to cut it yourself; however, sometimes that can't be done. Pre-cut trees can be just as good if you use these tests to help judge a tree's freshness:

ground. Only a few needles should fall, and the trunk should be sticky with sap.

- Make sure the needles are attached firmly to the twigs and that the needles can be bent without breaking.

Once you get the tree home, take these precautions to keep it fresh:

- Immerse the tree in a bucket of water until ready to decorate.

- When you're ready to put up the tree, cut a one- or two-inch diagonal slice off the bottom of the trunk. The new cut helps the tree absorb water and will preserve freshness.

- Put the tree in a sturdy stand with widespread legs and keep the stand filled with water the entire time the tree is indoors.

- Keep the tree at least three feet away from heat sources such as fireplaces and space heaters.

When the holidays are over, take the tree outside as soon as possible. Recycle or discard it according to your local city or county regulations.

If you are considering using an artificial tree this year, look for the label "Fire Resistant" when purchasing. Be aware that even fire-resistant artificial trees can catch fire—especially if they have years of dust buildup on them. Wash the artificial tree each year and store the parts in plastic bags. When decorating, be sure lights are designed for artificial tree use.

Important: To keep your tree from being knocked over, set it up where it is out of the way of traffic and does not block entrances or exits.

Lights

Mixing and matching lights can create a fire hazard, so keep outside lights outside and inside lights inside. Examine lights before you hang them. Check to see that each strand has a United Laboratory (UL) label, indicating it has been safety tested. Inspect the light strings and cords for fraying, bare wire, loose connections and broken sockets. After replacing missing or broken parts, check each set by setting it on a nonflammable surface and plugging it in for 10-15 minutes to see that the lights don't melt or smoke.

Now that you have examined the lights, you're ready to hang them. Be sure to take the following precautions:

- Position the bulbs so they are not in direct contact with needles or ornaments. Also keep lights away from curtains or flammable materials.

- Don't overload electrical outlets. Don't connect more than three sets of lights to an extension cord.

- Keep cords and plugs away from the water under the tree.

- Don't run a cord under a rug or carpet, since wires may overheat and surrounding materials could catch on fire.

- Be cautious when placing cords behind furniture—if pinched, cords may fray.

Remember: Unplug all decorations inside and outside the home before leaving the house or going to bed.

Fireplaces

The holidays bring to mind images of relaxing in front of a cozy fire. But before you get too comfortable, review these safety rules for using fireplaces:

- Ensure a professional cleans your chimney every year.

- Don't use a fireplace to burn wrapping materials or newspapers. It can create toxic fumes and even a flash fire.

- Use kindling and wooden matches to light fires, not flammable liquids.

- Always use a fire screen.

- Don't wear loose or flowing clothes when tending fires.

- Don't close the chimney flue until you ensure the fire is completely out.

- Ensure the fire is out before leaving the house or going to bed.

Important: Dispose of ashes in a metal container. Never store them in or near the house.

Holiday Parties and Alcohol

It's great to get together with coworkers and friends to celebrate the season. Let common sense be your guide. Please don't drink and drive. Use a designated driver or take a taxi home. Better yet, don't overdo it. If you're hosting a party, serve plenty of food along with the drink.

Holiday Blues

Finally, the holiday season—a joyous season for most people—can be just the opposite for many soldiers away from home perhaps for the first time. Being alone for the holidays can have a depressing effect. Don't let someone you know spend the holidays alone. The true meaning of the season is that of giving and opening our hearts to others.

From our family to yours, we wish you a truly happy, healthy, and safe holiday season. ♦

SAFETY FIRST!

Paula

Accident Briefs

Candle Flames Kill

A soldier died when his mobile home was destroyed by fire. Because of cold weather, the power was out, and the soldier was using candles for illumination. He fell asleep and left the candles burning.

Hazards. It is especially dangerous to use candles or other open flames for home lighting over a long period of time.

Controls. When the power is off, lanterns and flashlights make safer alternatives for home lighting than candles.

"Unloaded" Pistol Kills Soldier

A soldier shot himself in the head while demonstrating to his wife the use of his revolver. He apparently was unaware that the weapon was loaded.

Hazards. All weapons should be considered loaded and dangerous until checked for ammunition.

Controls. Weapons should not be stored loaded. In addition, the safety should be

engaged until the shooter is ready to pull the trigger. Further, a weapon should never be pointed toward anyone—even the person holding the weapon. Soldiers should also use extreme caution in demonstrating weapon use. The pistol range is the most appropriate place for such demonstrations.

Black Ice Takes Life

A soldier died after his car hit a patch of black ice and slid out of control into the path of an oncoming car.

Hazards. Areas that have black ice (which is more common in Europe than in the States) usually have a nonreflective road surface. When ice forms on this type of surface, it is almost invisible.

Controls. Alert drivers know about black ice and are always on the lookout. It normally occurs in shaded areas or on bridges from late fall through early spring. Such areas should be approached with caution. **Hint: If you have to scrape frost or ice off your windshield, conditions are right for black ice.** ♦

Heater Safety

Safe operation of any type of heater requires:

1. Proper assembly and maintenance
2. Trained, licensed operators
3. Proper fuel
4. Proper supervision

Commanders must take the lead in ensuring heaters are used and monitored correctly.

Get Back to the Basics

Failure to execute "the basics" is costing the Army precious resources that we can ill afford to lose.

The basics may include using the proper equipment to inflate a split-ring rimmed tire, properly training and licensing drivers, conducting a thorough passenger briefing, or making an on-the-spot correction during training exercises. Combinations of high optempo, fatigue, personnel turnover, overconfidence, and complacency have caused us to forget the basics, and our soldiers and our Army are paying the price. Injuries, destruction of equipment, and most tragically, fatalities are often the consequences of letting our guard down during basic day-to-day operations.

The leading causes of aviation and ground accidents continue to be overconfidence, complacency, and lack of proper training that often result in soldiers failing to execute operations using the task, conditions, and standards to which they were trained. Evidence suggests that leaders rarely check to ensure that routine duties—the simple things—are performed to standard.

Unsupervised, a soldier's desire to accomplish the mission can lead to taking shortcuts. Shortcuts in routine duties often lead to shortcuts in more complex tasks...and those shortcuts often lead to disaster.

Examples of accidents caused by overlooking the basics are located in the database here at the Safety Center and are too numerous to list. These accidents share a common thread—somewhere in the accident sequence, someone knowingly violated a basic standard or SOP, usually with good intentions, often trying to make things easier, and with mission accomplishment as the goal. In many of the cases, leaders failed to take corrective action either before or during the accident sequence.

Active leadership is the key to halting this alarming trend. When soldiers violate a procedure or standard, leaders must take immediate action to correct the situation. In

effect, failure to correct the violation sets a new, lower standard. It legitimizes the shortcut. Leaders at every level must establish procedures, and set and enforce standards that focus on doing tasks, including routine tasks, the right way...every time. This is something that we owe our soldiers. Tasks, conditions, and standards; standard operating procedures; and regulations have been developed over time for a reason: to

ensure safe, efficient operations. Enforcing them is one of the best ways we can take care of our soldiers. Taking or allowing shortcuts doesn't help our soldiers nor does it help us maintain an Army that is combat ready.

Setting the standard is a function of command; however, the primary responsibility for ensuring execution to standard lies with first-line leaders. The squad leader, instructor pilot, team chief, and even the "battle buddy" must understand fully what the standards are and understand that shortcuts are not the answer. Our junior

NCOs and officers must be the commander's controllers. Tell them what you want and the standards to which you expect your soldiers to perform. Give them the authority to enforce those standards and halt unsafe activities. Then hold them accountable. They must set the example and be the commander's representative in garrison, in training, and during deployments.

We are an Army of standards, and we know the basics contained within those standards. We execute them every day. But the trends indicate that collectively we are letting our guard down. We are destroying equipment and putting soldiers at risk because they are taking shortcuts and not executing the basics. Don't let the next fatal accident be on your watch because you took the basics for granted. ♦

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**We are
destroying
equipment and
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the basics.**

NCO Corner

"It Could Have Been Me!"

After being at the Safety Center almost 2 years, I've had enough time to get used to the questions about the patch above my right pocket and then the almost inevitable, "Safety Center? What's that?" To tell the truth, when I got the phone call to come here, I had the same reaction: "The Army Safety Center? What in the world is that?"

Of course, I knew all about safety. After all, I'd heard about it my whole career. Units had safety officers and NCOs put up safety posters on the bulletin boards. They would check the fire extinguishers to make sure they were up to date. Safety people were harmless enough, really. But that post safety officer! His mission seemed to be to make my life as miserable as possible. If he wasn't coming around doing a safety inspection, he was telling me why I couldn't get a mission done the way I wanted because it wouldn't be safe. What was his problem anyway? The Army is a risky business. If we aren't willing to accept a little risk, what are we doing in the Army? Sure, now and then someone is going to get hurt, but isn't that the cost of doing business?

Since reporting to the Safety Center, I have changed my mind. The Safety Center has a good system for processing and computerizing accident data. All the cold, official language of accident reports eventually ends up stored for easy access in an efficient computer database. Everything gets so well categorized that it sometimes seems that the Army could determine in a few minutes how many soldiers got hurt last year tripping over cracks in the sidewalk while wearing Santa Claus suits. At first, this all looked to me like one more bureaucratic waste of money.

Then one day, I had to retrieve data on cold-weather-related accidents and injuries for a *Countermeasure* article. Naively, I decided to look at several years in order to get enough information to establish any trends. I ended up with an overwhelming pile of computer printouts covering cold-weather injuries, cold-

weather vehicle accidents, tent fires, and all the other ways in which soldiers manage to hurt themselves when the cold season comes around each year.

Laboriously, I sifted through the reports, and I began to understand several things. First, the cost of these accidents was greater than I had ever imagined, whether measured in purely economic terms or in human costs. Secondly, almost all the accidents could have been prevented if someone had followed proper procedures, used a little common sense, or taken a little more care. More often than not, there was an NCO or officer who could have acted to prevent the accident. Finally, there were similarities. After a while, I could read a few lines of a report and almost predict the outcome.

Before I could get too self-righteous in dismissing all these soldiers and their NCOs as the victims of their own lack of good judgment, I realized uneasily that, in too many cases, I was seeing myself. I had done many of the same

things they had. The difference was that I was lucky and got away with it. Obviously, I had not recognized the odds against me when I trusted the welfare of my soldiers as well as myself to blind luck. It wasn't long before I noticed the same similarities in other kinds of accidents.

Being a soldier is riskier than being a civilian. There is nothing glamorous or macho or professional about being hurt or killed in an accident, on or off duty. I have pledged that I will never again accept risk blindly. From now on, I want to know ahead of time what the risks of an operation are—whether conducting a water-crossing or mowing grass at home. When I can eliminate a hazard and still get the mission accomplished, I will. I will try to minimize the risks that I can't eliminate, and I will do my best to ensure that those around me do the same. ♦

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"I had done many of the same things, the difference was that I was lucky and got away with it."

NCO Receives Safety Award

The Director of Army Safety Award of Excellence is presented to CSM Donald H. Sheppard, Transportation Center Command Sergeant Major, for his selfless service and dedicated support of the Army Safety Program.

CSM Donald H. Sheppard has been an active and visible leader in the safety arena. During FY 98 and FY 99, he played a significant role in the Fort Eustis and Fort Story safety programs. His direct involvement and dedication to safety principles resulted in reducing the military disabling injury rate by 26 percent and Army motor vehicle accident rate by 25 percent. In addition, neither installation experienced a POV fatality during this period.

CSM Sheppard established a CSM safety action council that addressed and focused on resolving real-time safety issues. The highlight for the council over the 2-year period was the annual pre-exodus holiday safety show. Over a 3-day period, the show was presented to over 4,500 soldiers, civilians, and family members. Personnel were entertained and educated through skits, guest speakers, and music—truly a unique and creative way of conveying the safety message to all personnel.

CSM Sheppard also was instrumental in recognizing selected individuals on Fort Eustis and Fort Story for positive safe behavior. His pro-activeness and attention to detail raised safety awareness and heightened the

command's accident prevention program. CSM Sheppard personally reviewed each soldier and civilian nomination for their contributions to safety. To reward safe performance,

awardees received a black and gold Garland ink pen with the CSM insignia mounted on the top and inscribed with, "NCOs Protecting the Force, Backbone of the Army."

CSM Sheppard's focus has always been his soldiers. If you talk to him, he would probably say that he was just doing his job. And he's right. Noncommissioned officers are supposed to take care of soldiers, as

well as train soldiers to standard and enforce those standards.

There are thousands of other NCOs out there doing that every day. On every installation, soldiers are giving of themselves so that personnel can do their jobs better. These are strong and courageous people who go the extra mile to help our fellow soldier. NCOs must set the example every day by living and practicing these safety principles.

CSM Sheppard's sincere commitment to safety and extensive efforts to increase safety awareness truly make him deserving of this award. On behalf of the U.S. Army Safety Center, thank you, CSM Sheppard, for a job well done. ♦



Editor's Note: A lot of NCOs are doing good work, and we'd like to hear about them. Please send their story, a photo, and/or a reproducible copy of the unit crest to Commander, U.S. Army Safety Center, ATTN: CSSC-OG (Countermeasure), Fort Rucker, AL 36362-5363 or email countermeasure@safety-emli1.army.mil. Include full names and complete addresses and phone numbers so we can get in touch, if necessary.

You Make the Call

"You Make the Call" is a regular feature in Countermeasure. The purpose is to educate, stimulate thought, and exchange information that will expand understanding and application of risk management in training and operational environments. All you have to do is read the synopsis below and write down what you consider to be the best way to handle the situation. Send your answers to U.S. Army Safety Center, Bldg. 4905, 5th Ave., ATTN: Countermeasure, Fort Rucker, AL 36362-5363, e-mail countermeasure@safety-emh1.army.mil or fax 334-255-9528. We'll select the best answers from those submitted and the winner will receive a Safety Center coin and a letter of congratulations from the Director of Army Safety. All winning entries will be published in a future issue.

You are the First Sergeant in a mechanized infantry company (Bradley) that is task organized with a platoon of M1 tanks. You are in a desert environment, and the weather is cold and dry with fluctuating temperatures ranging from 40 to 60 degrees throughout the day and dropping to 20 at night. You arrive in the tactical assembly area (TAA) at 1300 and are finishing the company's re-supply operations consisting of classes 1 and 3, and a consolidation and redistribution of class 5.

The company's mission is to conduct movement to contact operations with the task force (TF) against a reported motorized rifle battalion (MRB) with a

line of departure (LD) time of 0500 the next morning. The distance to the LD is approximately 30 km from your current TAA location. The commander has issued the operations order. The rehearsals and back-briefs are done.

At 1900, the commander receives a Frago that the TF is now going to use your company's route of movement to the LD with your company as the lead element to secure a choke point 15-km into the route. Enemy helicopters have been spotted in the vicinity of the small mountainous choke point along the route with the possibility of anti-armor emplacements, therefore increasing the likelihood of an ambush.

The commander goes back into the planning phase and decides that he is going to use the dismounted infantry soldiers to secure the pass with a wheeled insertion no later than 2200. Your unit has been augmented with dismount soldiers from the cross-attached platoon, leaving you with four 9-man squads of dismounted troops. You have two 5-ton trucks in your company trains; however, one is loaded with all of your company's gear consisting of tentage, heaters, spare communications and maintenance parts, and a



combat load of MREs (3 per man). The second truck is used in log-pack operations, which also has to be back at the logistics release point (LRP) with an SFC or higher escort NLT 2030. This truck can be used, but your class one containers have to be returned to the brigade support area (BSA) with the log-pack that night. In addition, your water trailer is full.

What will you do?

From a logistical standpoint, what steps

would you and the executive officer take to ensure the success of the dismount mission from insertion to extraction after the last vehicle negotiates the pass? What risk factors are involved and how would you minimize them to an acceptable level with appropriate control measures? **YOU MAKE THE CALL.** ♦

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NYARNG NCO Submits Best Answer

Thank you for responding to the September issue of "You Make the Call." All answers were excellent; however SSG Christopher D. Krupa submitted the best response. He took a step-by-step approach and identified each individual hazard and corresponding control measure to reduce that hazard. Congratulations, SSG Krupa! You will receive a Safety Center coin and a letter of congratulations from the Director of Army Safety for the following answer.

First of all, I have to take into account my environment. We are in a tactical environment that is cold and icy. The temperature is low, the snow is deep, and the road conditions are not the greatest.

HAZARD #1. THE M113 HAS THREE BAD TRACK BLOCKS ON ONE SIDE.

This is considered a high risk because of the environment and the road conditions we are expected to encounter. There is the possibility of damaging Army equipment and risking my driver's life, as well as injuring other personnel around us, if we operate the carrier with bad blocks. The only fix for this is to get the track repaired prior to mission deployment.

HAZARD #2. THE HEATER IS INOPERATIVE.

This has no effect on the carrier itself, but to the crew, this is critical. In such a harsh environment, operating this M113 without a heater is putting my crew's well-being in jeopardy. Morale would be low and cold injury would be likely. The heater would have to be repaired or replaced prior to mission deployment.

HAZARD #3. THE NEW GUY GOES ON THE MISSION.

Let's assume that these deficiencies go unrepaired and we deploy on the mission with our new soldier. What kind of example are we setting for a new troop? His safety is placed on the back burner by riding in an unsafe vehicle; he is subject to cold injuries due to his being out in the cold for days without getting warm and being immobile for long periods while riding in a crowded vehicle.

WHAT WOULD I DO???

First off, I would NOT deploy my carrier on this mission. You cannot have an effective mission with defective equipment. Assuming the lieutenant is an officer with common sense, he should allow an alternate vehicle to accomplish this mission. Upon completion of repairs to my vehicle, I would gladly resume my duties assigned and show the new soldier how this Army operates — with top-notch equipment and the soldier's safety and well-being held at the top of the list of concerns. ♦

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Swimming Tips – *April*

The Do's and Don'ts of Boating Safety – *April*

Wheeled Vehicles

Asbestos Advisory on HMMWV Gaskets – *May*
Safety Alert-Asbestos on HMMWV Gaskets – *June*
Safety Alert: HEMTT – *September*

You Make the Call

Dismounted Infantry Soldiers Secure a Pass with a Wheeled Vehicle Insertion – *December*

M113 With Broken Track in Cold, Snowy Environment – *September*

M109A6 Unit Receives FRAGO to Displace Soldiers While Fatigued – *October* ♦

New USASC Initiatives

The U.S. Army Safety Center has established an aggressive safety initiatives program that includes on-site assistance visits and an NCO professional development mobile training team (NCOPTD/MTT) to provide risk management training and assistance at all command levels, to include Active Army, National Guard, and Reserve Component personnel. The Safety Center will provide these services at no monetary cost to corps, division, or brigade-sized units and installations.

Assistance Visit Program

The Safety Center offers a 10-event, week-long, unit-tailored visit to provide training in hazards identification, "POV Toolbox" application, ground and aviation systems safety, driver's training program applications, and risk management integration at the leader and senior NCO levels. From a standard menu of events, units identify their requirements and USASC will tailor a team of subject matter experts to address the areas of concern. The Safety Center will "train the trainer," leaving units with a core of trained personnel who will integrate risk management more effectively into all operations and missions.

The team has the capability to conduct an individual unit (battalion) assessment on maintenance, training, operations and safety, providing non-attribution feedback to the commander on where the unit stands in comparison with like units across the Army. The program is designed to cross-fertilize good ideas. The Safety Center learns from units what works in the field and then provides others proven methods to eliminate potential accidents by identifying and mitigating hazards.

NCO Professional Development Mobile Training Team

The intent of this training is to teach safety to NCOs. NCOs are the leaders on the ground "where the rubber meets the road" and are most likely to have a direct impact on accident prevention. Therefore, USASC has designed a 45-hour course focused on hazard identification and risk management. The target audience is sergeants and staff sergeants who will integrate risk management into both the planning and execution phases of training and operational missions by speaking up when "something doesn't look right." Another benefit of this training is positive habit transfer; whereas, soldiers use risk management skills learned on duty and off duty.

This is great training for NCOs. If a unit/installation can provide 30-50 NCOs for a week, the Safety Center will help train leaders who are better prepared to identify and control hazards on ranges, in motor pools, or wherever high-risk operations occur. Additionally, this training program can be a reward for your outstanding NCOs. It is accredited by the American Council on Education, and upon completion, your NCOs are awarded three hours of college credit.

The cost to the unit is a commitment of time and selected personnel for a single week. The Safety Center will do everything possible to accommodate the unit's training schedule. For more information, visit our web site, <http://safety.army.mil>. ♦

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