



SEVERE WEATHER DRIVING:



DO SLOW DOWN



DO WEAR YOUR SEAT BELT



DO FILL YOUR GAS TANK



DO KNOW IF YOU HAVE ANTI-LOCK BRAKES



DON'T USE HANDHELD DEVICES



DON'T USE CRUISE CONTROL



DON'T DRIVE UNLESS NECESSARY



DON'T DRIVE UNDER THE

Source: www.nhtsa.gov

Combat Edge

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- Master Caution Triage by Maj Clayton "Tales" Macomber 758 AS, Pittsburgh AFRS, PA and 1Lt Linsey "SP" Curry 494 FS, Lakenheath AFB, UK
- A No-Win Situation by TSgt Nathan P. Neer 325 MUNS, Tyndall AFB, FL

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THE COMBAT EDGE

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COVER PHOTO BY A1C TIFFANY EMERY

AUAnt

"For me, life is about continuously being hungry." These are not my words, but the aphorism of actor/statesman/ politician Arnold Schwarzenegger. When looking back over a year of safety statistics, it sometimes seems there are certain rheostats we just can't move. An example is the number of motorcycle mishaps. But Arnold's succinct prose remind us that safety is a never-ending quest and the continued quest for zero mishaps and no fatalities is what drives our safety community and our daily efforts. This year, our ACC Safety team did a commendable job eliminating mission-hindering hazards, providing training and education, and reacting to mishaps. To expound, I called upon the Flight, Weapons, and Occupational Division Chiefs here at ACC to give their take on the year:



Col Joe Augustine Director of Safety



Col Jesse "Shogun" Doyle, Chief of Flight Safety: "Success is a journey, not a destination." FY23 resulted in the least amount of Class A mishaps in the history of Air Combat Command. However, it was the proverbial blood, sweat and tears expelled in the years leading up to FY23 that produced that significant accomplishment. Whether it was formal training, lessons learned from yourself or

others, or simply the accumulation of experience, safety is the output of disciplined execution and effective risk management. Stay focused on the fundamentals, continue to grow and learn, and this journey will continue in a positive direction.



Mr. Aaron Solomon, Chief of Weapons Safety: Weapons safety mishaps for FY23 were their lowest in 4 years. However, statistical trends are cyclical in nature and may not result from sound programs during the period. Luck, probability, or whatever you may call it can be involved. A safety mindset is required to minimize the need to rely on good fortune and produces a consistent result of minimal threats to human life (i.e. mishaps). Consistent effort makes statistics a byproduct as opposed to an indicator. By and

large our community is very good at the safety mindset because following technical data and established procedures are ingrained in our business. I applaud your efforts and encourage you to continue to look out for yourself and others.



Mr. Rodney "Robbie" Robinson, Chief of Occupational Safety: "Doing great stuff as evidenced by an awesome ACC team supporting the mission and each other ... but we can always do a little better and have targets of opportunity with motorcycles and outdoor activities ... slow down and think things through."

In closing, I want to thank the ACC Team who are 'doing great stuff' by keeping the mission safe. I'll also add a reminder that

even when things are going well, there is always an element of chance. Keeping an extra margin of safety is essential. Or to once again quote Arnold, "Good things don't happen by coincidence"!



Shortly after take-off, while I was in Instrument Meteorological Conditions (IMC), my aircraft suffered a failure of the Modular Mission Computer (MMC), the core computer for the F-16. Its failure resulted in the loss of all usable navigation aids, the main situational awareness multi-function displays, one of two radios, and the Head Up Display primary instrument flight reference. I transitioned to my standby instruments until achieving Visual Meteorological Conditions (VMC) above 9,000 Mean Sea Level.

Upon reaching VMC, I further analyzed the situation and determined there were multiple other MMC failures, and it appeared electrical powercycling was occurring, a much more serious problem. With the power-cycle issue, I was left with three available recovery options: 1) immediately attempt a heavyweight formation approach/ landing at weather minimums with another F-16 that was at minimum fuel; 2) divert to Moody AFB, approximately 200 miles away, as a single ship with no usable navigational aids and an unreliable electrical system; or 3) delay the recovery and accomplish a formation approach with a dissimilar aircraft, increasing the complexity of the approach.

After validating I was at an appropriate fuel weight, I executed all checklist procedures for the recurring MMC failures and electrical power-cycling, and elected to proceed with the

immediate formation approach to weather minimums with another F-16. I declared an inflight emergency because of the nature of the malfunction, the deteriorating weather conditions, and fuel constraints. This meant I gained traffic priority, and ensured fire crews would be standing by, should the emergency become more severe.

Without reliable navigational aids, I flew visual fingertip formation on the wing of the other F-16. While being led back to the field by my wingman, I continued to troubleshoot the problem. After breaking out of the weather at 500 feet AGL, I aligned myself with the runway and landed uneventfully from a straight in, while my wingman went around and landed behind me from his own approach. After landing, I was met by the fire department, and after a visual inspection of the aircraft was cleared to taxi back to chocks and shut down normally.

While the weather conditions and fuel considerations increased the complexity of this emergency, it was by no means uncommon for legacy fighter aircraft to experience such malfunctions. I had a similar experience years ago, while flying F-16s at Spangdahlem, Germany. In that situation, as in this one, I lost all navigational instruments while flying in IMC, including my primary attitude indicator. I experienced significant spatial disorientation during that event, but was fortunate to have had the training to transition to my

standby attitude indicator before something catastrophic occurred. I know of many other friends and colleagues who have experienced similar malfunctions in fighter aircraft and have handled them with extraordinary skill and confidence.

I am proud of the safety culture I have witnessed during my time in fighter aircraft, particularly the young pilots who find a way to get the job done safely and effectively while still pushing to be the best. As our aircraft grow older, malfunctions such as this will continue to occur. Therefore, the importance of training in realistic environments cannot be overstated. In addition to being tactically proficient in fighter aircraft, the ability to safely and effectively execute the most basic tasks is also a must for maintaining readiness to defend our nation.



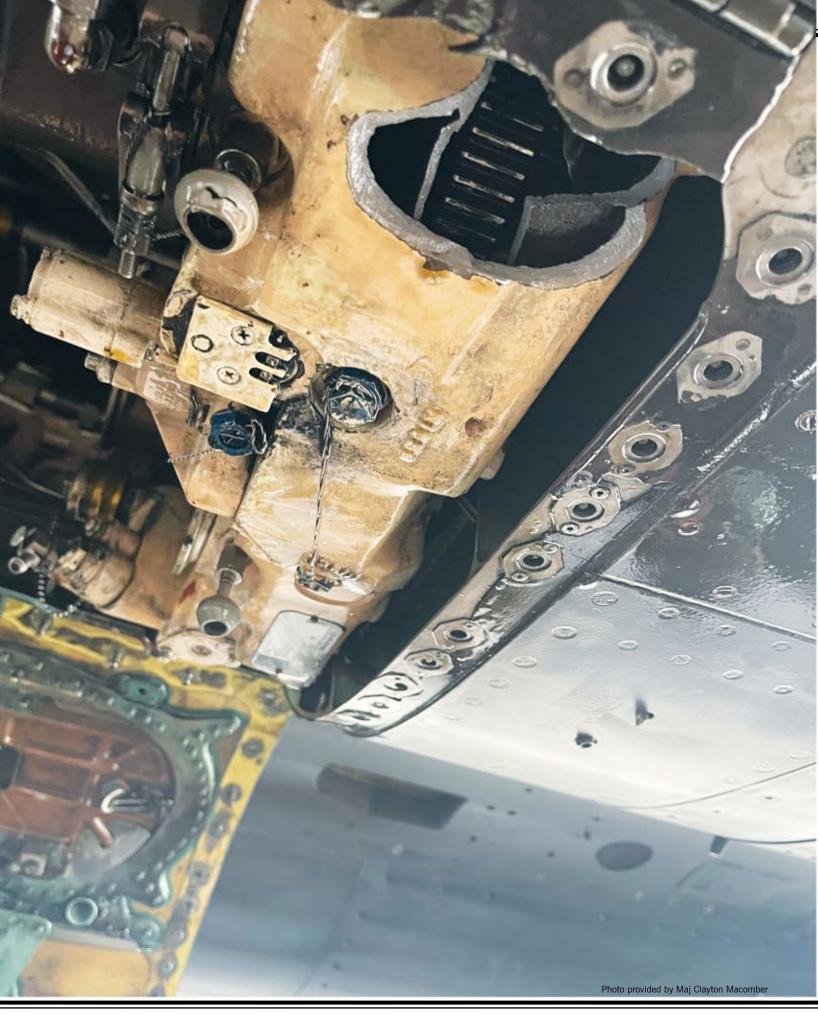
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BY MAJ CLAYTON "TALES" MACOMBER AND 1LT LINSEY "SP" CURRY

ur task was to exercise one of the most demanding F-15E missions: basic-course low altitude target attacks. Our 2-ship formation consisted of a student Weapons System Officer (WSO) and me (Instructor Pilot) in the lead jet, and a student pilot and Instructor WSO in the No. 2 jet. We were nearing the pull-up point for a GBU-12 loft, driving target-direct at 500 feet above ground level and 500 knots. As the action range counted down, we felt a thunk, heard an audible click, and the Head Up Display and all other displays went blank. We began a smooth pull away from the ground to process the situation.

Photo by SMSgt Ralph Branson



My first thought was a bird strike. In the front seat, I could see several lights illuminated on the systems caution light panel; however, detailed caution information normally appears on the displays. With the screens still blank, there was no information. A quick scan of the engine display and a look at the wings confirmed good engines and no visible impacts.

Within a few seconds, STANDBY began flashing on the screens, indicating the return of systems, but not all displays recovered. This indicated an avionics fault that could be corrected with a computer reset, which was initiated. When all displays finally returned about a minute after the incident, our fears were realized: The display showed a huge stack of cautions.

Without further investigation, it was clear we needed to head back to base immediately. The next step in analyzing the situation involved meticulously sorting through the cautions. With so many displayed, we performed a sort of triage by resetting systems that had kicked off-line. Soon, the telltale indications of

an AirframeMounted
Accessory Drive
failure were
apparent. This
meant we had
lost half our
hydraulic pumps,
two hydraulic
circuits, and a
generator.

Through excellent crew coordination both within the jet and with the formation, we were able to accomplish a number of tasks simultaneously, checking over the aircraft,

running several checklists, and coordinating with Air Traffic Control. We made the decision to declare an inflight emergency to expedite our transit through the busy Raleigh airspace. Doing so reduced a tremendous amount of friction. Although this certainly was a serious emergency, all the back-up systems worked correctly, leaving us with enough systems still functioning.

While following the checklist, we made a point of monitoring the engine oil pressure. The failure we experienced could have included damage to the engine case, which would have led to a complete loss of oil and subsequent engine seizure. Fortunately, this did not occur in our jet, but we still kept the engine at idle for the remainder of the flight. The recovery went smoothly, and we were on the ground within 15 minutes of the failure.

This emergency highlighted some important points we always emphasize in training for emergencies. The first is to keep flying the aircraft. Seeing cockpit displays suddenly go dark is alarming, and is a drain on

situational awareness, particularly at low altitude. Although easier said than done, it is vital to fight through the paralysis and get the jet away from the ground. Second, sometimes things happen that are not expected failures, and are not included in a checklist. The computer fault that blanked the displays was a rare anomaly associated with a particular generator failure. A thorough knowledge of systems is critical to understanding how failures may or may not be related, and how to assess the airworthiness and capabilities of the aircraft in that moment. Lastly, solid Crew Resource Management (CRM) is essential for disciplined checklist usage and safe recovery of the aircraft.

Although no emergency should be haphazardly rushed, sometimes speed is a factor, and CRM ensures a methodical and efficient process. Even though a tiny gear buried deep in the engine tried to trip us up, our backup systems and training worked as advertised, and we were able to ride the Mac-Air Warhorse into the Formal Training Unit battle the next day.



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able to learn something from my situation. It took place just five short years ago, while I was deployed.

As a Senior Airman, I was delivering missile trailers to the flightline in support of F-22 operations. I had about two years of experience delivering trailers to the flightline, but this flightline and explosive movement route were relatively new to me. There also was a language barrier between me and the locals in Air Traffic Control (ATC), which did not make my job easy. As long as

to the flightline. We pulled up to the locked gate to enter the active taxiway. My shotgun hopped out to unlock the gate while I contacted ATC. Once approved, we began our short trip down the side of the busy taxiway.

Halfway down, we were contacted again by ATC, who instructed us to exit the taxiway immediately. Continuing on our route for the final two minutes would be ignoring the Tower's instruction. Turning around was impossible, as our wide turning radius would put us too close

steep to accommodate two fullyloaded missile trailers and our tow vehicle. To make matters worse. we asked the tower which option they preferred, but neither of us could understand a word of their response. What were we to do?

We made a quick decision in the interest of safety, and stuck with it. We continued forward to finish our trip. The choices of turning around, stopping, or pulling off were all either undesirable or impossible. That may have been an easy decision for an NCO or SNCO to make,

but, for the less-experienced Airman, the event was an instructive moment. Being able to assess the situation quickly and identify options were crucial in order to make the best decision.

After losing communication with ATC and informing them of our plan, a USAF representative from ATC praised us for making the

right call. We were told it was a no-win situation, but it would've been worse had we made any other decision.

If your decisions protect people and property, there's a very good chance they're the right ones. Turning around could have resulted in clipping an aircraft wing or damaging a

missile. Pulling off the taxiway could have damaged trailer tires or caused the trailers to roll over and damage missiles. Simply stopping on the taxiway would have lengthened the time spent in a place where we weren't supposed to be. This is exactly how my shotgun and I avoided losing in a no-win situation.



BY SRA ANDEW M. SORRELL

hile working weekend duty in April of 2021, an already long weekend took a turn for the worse. My crew was tasked with performing 90day LAU 141 (rail launcher) inspections as well as operational checks on all doors of the F-22 Raptor. After already having worked a long week, then having a no-notice weekend duty shift,

we were just tired. Our load crew team chief was also out on leave, and we were assigned to work with a different team chief.

We began the job by opening the left side LAU 141 and performing functional checks on the rail. We performed every check that was required by technical order, with all passing. The team chief then took our equipment to the other side of the jet and started to perform the right-side LAU 141 operational checks. About 5 minutes later he came back to the left side of the aircraft, and returned our tools and grabbed our torque wrench, an item required to reset the forward detent.

He walked back over for about 30 seconds, then returned to our side and informed me and my 2 man that the right-side LAU 141 operational check was complete, and we were good to press on with the operational checks of the doors. He said he needed to run up to the building, and left. My 2 man and I fired up the aircraft

and proceeded with the left-side door operational check, followed by the left main weapons bay door operational check, then finally the right main weapons bay door operational check. The final check that was required at this point was the right-side weapons bay door.

As we got set up to perform this check, the team chief came back out and took control of the Portable Maintenance Aid. He then proceeded to retract the rail—without a spotter, and

without checking the rail. He walked over to the rail, only to find that he had forgotten to close the forward fairing, and it had snapped off during the retraction. After reporting the incident, we were told the team chief had assumed we would check over his work before firing up the jet.

We had many chances to prevent this incident from occurring. From a safety standpoint, the 2W151 field works in teams of 3, and each person always should check

on the others. We failed to do this, and it ultimately cost the Air Force thousands of dollars. Also, anyone who performs a job should see the job through to its completion, to prevent other personnel from missing a detail from where you left off. Finally, when actuating any movable surfaces on an aircraft, you always should have a designated spotter to ensure the movement is safe. This incident was a real learning experience for our unit, and I hope it can be the same to yours.

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That Was Close!

BY TSGT ROBERT R. REYNOLDS III



One day, a SrA and I (A1C) were tasked with a flight-line delivery. I can't recall the exact munitions they wanted, but I do remember the job required towing tandem trailers. The SrA was the driver, and I was his shotgun. We picked up both trailers in the bomb dump, and headed out to the flight line to get the aircraft loaded.

When we arrived at the entry control point, we had to make a sharp left turn in order to get through. The driver took the turn a little too sharply, and we nearly hit the gate. I got out to disconnect the rear trailer and readjust its position; however, the road had a slight downward grade, and I couldn't push the trailer uphill by myself. I called out to my driver to assist me. He climbed out of the truck and went to the back of the rear trailer to push it.

As soon I lifted the rear trailer's lunette out of the pintle hook on the back of the front trailer, the

front trailer began to move. I looked up and saw the bobtail and the front trailer rolling downhill, heading directly toward some construction equipment. I yelled to my coworker and set the trailer tongue down, while he ran toward the driver seat of the bobtail.

Too late. The bobtail and trailer struck the construction equipment. We were very, very lucky: the pintle hook on the front of the bobtail just bounced off the giant tire of the digger. There was no damage whatsoever. We counted our blessings (and our stripes). backed the truck up, reconnected the rear trailer, and continued to the flight line. Things could have turned out far worse, and we knew we had been extremely fortunate.

Although we didn't get chewed out in our leadership's office or receive paperwork, we still learned valuable lessons, especially that procedures that may seem useless are in place for good reason. It takes only a second and a lapse in judgement for a safety mishap to occur. We learned to take our time, slow down, and use common sense and proper procedures with every task.

While we all make mistakes and will continue to do so throughout our careers—we can learn from our experience and pass the lessons on to others, to prevent safety mishaps in the future.



Photo by SSgt John Bainter

SANDSTORME

BY SSGT STEPHANIE A. NETZEL

n May of 2016, my unit was gearing up to come home from a nearly 7-month deployment. Our replacement crew had shown up a few days prior, and turnover was underway. We had been warned the day before of an approaching storm, and my unit made sure to be ready to leave on time. We had been notified of a high wind advisory at 2300, before the day shift came by to pick us up. When the truck pulled up outside, I opened the door to my tent. I hadn't opened the door more than a couple of inches when the wind ripped the handle from my hand and slammed the door into the tent frame. Instantly, I was blasted with sand.

Unable to see clearly, I made my way to the truck as fast as I could. We drove through the sandstorm to the nearest hard shelter, right next to my shop on the flightline. We arrived to find most of the workers there. Next to the hardened shelter was a Large Area Maintenance Shelter (LAMS). Despite the storm, a few members were still in the LAMS, moving equipment and materials to the back to protect them.

As the storm worsened, the frame of the LAMS began to fail. All Airmen working inside it were directed to evacuate immediately; however, in the chaos, a single Airman didn't make it out in time. The LAMS collapsed, and the Airman was severely injured by falling support beams. An emergency team retrieved him

and took him by helicopter to the nearest medical facility. The whole event was terrifying. There was a great deal of commotion, with howling winds, sand and debris everywhere, as well as the crash of the LAMS as it collapsed.

Looking back, there were steps we could have taken that could have prevented the event. First, sandstorms never should be taken lightly. Rather than continuing to work, the Airmen should have evacuated the LAMS as soon as we were told to seek shelter. Second, accounting for personnel should have been the top priority. Finally, we should have been better prepared, since sandstorms are common in that location.

Always keep the safety of your members as your number-one priority. Equipment is replaceable; a human life isn't.



Autopilot Takes a Wrong Turn

BY SSGT BRANDON J. LABAK

hen I enlisted, I never would have thought my job would be Tactical Aircraft Maintenance, otherwise known as Crew Chief. From my first day on the flight line, I wanted to become one of the sharpest F-16 Crew Chiefs in the unit, and I was willing to do whatever it took to gain experience. As ambitious as I was at the time, my job turned out to be simple launchand-recovery operations. After months of routine, I was running on autopilot. I could guarantee

everything would be done as expected. If you do the same thing every day, nothing can go wrong ... or can it?

One day, I prepared a jet for its first takeoff, as usual. I saw the pilot approaching, and turned on my autopilot, going through the routine: salute my pilot, look through the forms together, and help him get settled into the seat. Nothing new. The next moment, things took a turn. As I inspected the aircraft around the intake, I smacked my head on one of the antennas below the pitot tube. It threw me for a second, but I shook it off and kept working, relying on muscle memory.

I completed the checks on the plane after startup, and reached the point at which I had to approach the pilot to show him

a safety pin. He looked at me and said "Hey, Chief! Your head is bleeding!" I had received my first injury (Falcon Bite) from an F-16. Another Crew Chief took my place, and my supervisor took me to the clinic to get my head stitched up.

Many of us believe autopilot is normal, but should it be? I had let mine takeover to the point that my main concern was finishing the task, rather than ensuring my well-being. If I had practiced safe habits and remained alert, I would have avoided an injury. As a Crew Chief, I should have known better than to be on autopilot. As an Airman, I should always be physically and mentally present to complete the mission safely.

What's Your Story?

Wisdom comes with age. Share yours with us.

You've spent years training to be a member of the world's greatest Air Force. Not only do you have skills, but you also have experience—and the wisdom that comes with it.

There have been countless times when you were confronted by challenges you met, obstacles you overcame. Each of them made you grow as an Airman.

Share a tale from your experience. Tell us about the time when ___. Write a "There I was ..." account of a mishap. Help other Airmen learn and grow. Give us the benefit of your wisdom.

Throughout the long history of our safety magazine, from TAC Attack (1961) to The Combat Edge (1992), the message of safety has remained the same. Help keep it current by telling it in your own, unique way. Write your safety story and send it to us at thecombatedge@us.af.mil.

You have something to say, and we're listening.



Thru 30 Sep 2023 FY23 Flight Aircraft Class A Fatal Destroyed Aircraft Damage 15 AF 0 0 16 AF **USAFWC** ANG **AFRC** 0 CONTRACT COCOM

F 123 Occupational						
	Class A Fatal	Class A Non-Fatal	Class B			
AFCENT	0	0	0			
USAFWC	1	0	0			
12 AF	0	0	0			
15 AF	9, 1	0	2			
16 AF	0	0	0			

Thru 30 Sep 2023

FY23 Weapons Thru 30 Sep 2023							
	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D	Class E		
ACC	0	0	3	4	7		

Legend

Class A - Fatality; permanent total disability; property damage \$2.5 million or more Class B - Permanent partial disability; property damage between \$600,000 and \$2.5 million Class C - Lost workday; property damage between \$60,000 and \$600,000 (Class description effective Oct. 1, 2019)

(RED) = On-duty (BLACK) = Off-duty

Symbols for Mishap Aircraft



Flight Notes

Air Combat Command experienced two MQ-9A Class-A mishaps in the 4th Quarter of 2023, bringing the fiscal year (FY) totals to six Class-A mishaps, a continued downward trend over the last three years. Additionally, we ended FY23 with zero fatal aviation mishaps. Statistically, FY23 is worthy of praise – the lowest Class-A total in the history of ACC, and one of only four FYs without a fatality; however, statistics only tell a portion of the story, and the risks the members of ACC face today are no less significant than in the past. In order to repeat the success of FY23, we must all take a disciplined approach to risk identification and mitigation, and keep focused on the fundamentals.

Occupational Notes

Air Combat Command Occupational Safety sustained eleven Class-A mishaps (all fatalities) in fiscal year (FY) 23, one was on-duty. Five mishaps involved 2-Wheel vehicles, three involved Sports and Recreational activities, two involved 4-Wheel vehicles and the other mishap was an on-duty Jet Ski (Afloat) mishap. In FY23 there was a significant increase in 2-Wheel fatalities (5 vs 3) and in the Sports and Recreational arena (4 vs 0). ACC also sustained its first on-duty fatality since FY19. Several causal factors led to these mishaps. Excessive speed, distracted driving, lack of training, and poor use of risk management. The Command also sustained two Class B mishaps in FY23, a fire in a supply hangar and a mishap involving a member that lost the tip of his thumb. We must remember that safety is everyone's responsibility. As we start the new fiscal year and the weather begins to change we must slow down and think things through before we act. If you see someone doing something that doesn't look right take the time to say something...you might just prevent a mishap.

Weapons Notes

During the fourth quarter of FY23, ACC encountered a few weapons incidents. One was classified as a Class-D mishap, in which a member injured their shoulder during a missile upload. Additionally, there were two Class-E mishaps. The first occurred when the radome on an AGM-65 cracked during unpacking. The second Class-E mishap occurred during a GBU-38 release, when a pylon was damaged. The 1760 cable failed to retain during the release, resulting in the 1760 being torn away from the pylon.

As we reach the end of FY23, there have been several instances of personnel injuries during munitions handling. We kindly request that everyone remain vigilant, keeping in mind the importance of being aware of your surroundings. Remember to utilize proper lifting techniques when handling explosives. Your safety is our top priority, and we want to ensure a secure and injury-free environment for all.

3rd Quarter FY23 Awards



Aircrew Safety Award Crew of ZEUS 33 461 ACW/SE, 461 ACW Robins AFB, GA



Aviation Maintenance Safety
SSgt Blake C. Price
94 FGS, 1 FW
JB Langley-Eustis, VA



Explosives SafetyClose Air Support
57 MUNS, 57 WG
Nellis AFB, NV



Flight Line Safety
TSgt Zachary T. Tupy
55 ECG, 55 WG
Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ





Safety Career Professional SSgt Alan M. Travassos 4 FW/SEG, 4 FW Seymour Johnson AFB, NC



Unit Safety Representative SSgt Brandon J. Smith 386 ELRS, 386 AEW Ali Al Salem AB, Kuwait



Weapons Safety Professional
TSgt Ryan A. Drake
20 FW/SEW, 20 FW
Shaw AFB, SC



Unit Safety 94 FGS, 1 FW JB Langley-Eustis, VA



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THRILS Not Spills PAGE 8



Each year, on average, more than 5,000 people are killed and more than 418,000 are injured due to weather-related vehicle crashes. If you need to drive in snow or cold conditions, TAKE IT SLOW IN THE SNOW. Black ice can be difficult to see. If the temperature is near freezing, drive like you're on iceyou may be!

Before you leave the house, especially before a longer trip in winter, make sure all fluid levels are full and ensure that the lights, heater and windshield wipers are in proper condition. Keep your gas tank near full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines. Avoid traveling alone. Let someone know your timetable and primary and alternate routes. Then call 511 for the latest traffic and road incidents, including construction and weather conditions and restrictions. Every state offers this Department of Transportation service. Call before you leave; it might change your plans!



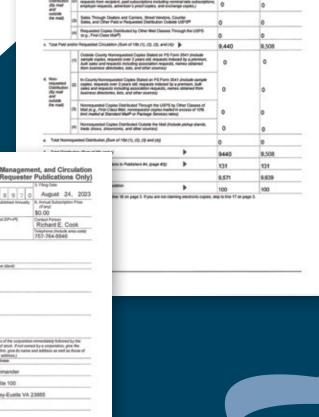
WIDOWMAKER by TSgt Gregory W. Arnold

- THRILLS, NOT SPILLS by TSgt Gabrielle L. Murray 633 WSA/SEG, JB Langley-Eustis, VA
- Danger in the Rink by SSgt Gerald E. Betz, Jr. 366 FW/SE, Mountain Home AFB, ID
- 14 | Holiday Home Decorating Safety Tips
- 15 | Shop Smart, Shop Safe
- 16 | 8 Tips for Safer Winter Riding

Annual Statement of Ownership

We are authorized by the U.S. Postal Service to use Periodicals postage to distribute The Combat Edge magazine. Certain users of this rating are required to publish their Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation annually.





432 MXS, Nellis AFB, NV

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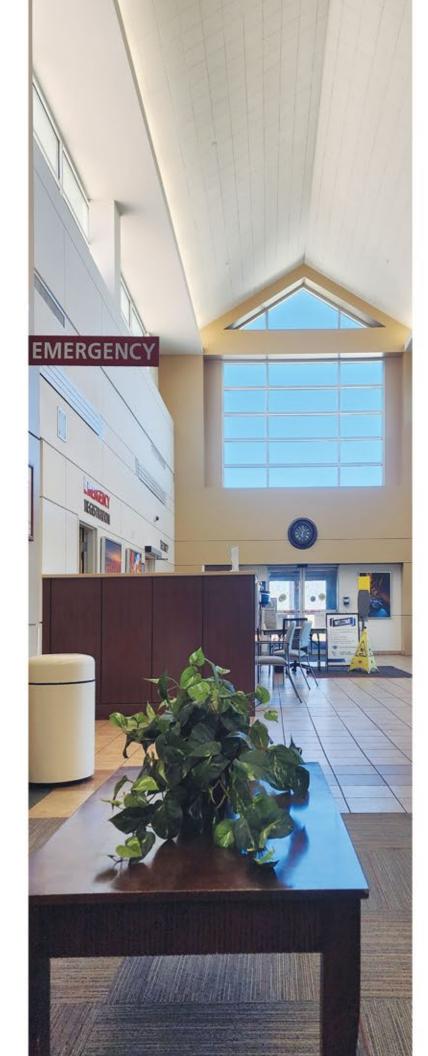
There were nine dead trees that had to be cut down that day. We got up early and readied ourselves for an 0630 start time. With gloves, safety glasses, hard hats, and sharp chainsaw blades, we were ready to start dropping. There was a large dead tree leaning against a beautiful pine we desperately wanted to save. This situation was one of the more dangerous ones we would face, and we therefore decided to save it until the afternoon. When the time came, we set up our equipment at the tree and formulated a plan to lay it down. The idea was to ensure it avoided hitting large trees on its way down, while also being careful not to crush smaller trees that would eventually grow up as replacements. Once we finished the final cut, the tree started to fall. "TIMBER!" The tree landed only three inches to the left of where we had planned.

There happened to be a "widowmaker" hung up in the live tree. A widowmaker is the broken-off branch or top of a tree hanging in another tree. It can come crashing down without warning, and those standing beneath it have no time to react. This one was what had been holding up the dead tree we had just cut down, but we hadn't noticed

As we rested, I took my hard-hat off and wiped the sweat away from my forehead with the back of my arm. We were celebrating the tree's falling right where we planned when a tree-top approximately 20 feet long and 10 inches in diameter dropped from about 25 feet in the air and landed on my face!

It was lights out for me. We never heard it coming down. In a way, that was good: If I had heard it coming, I would have looked up, and it would hit me in the center of my face, rather than my forehead. I was very lucky the injury wasn't more serious. If I had been standing two inches over, the tree would have landed directly on top of my head. Either of these situations would have guaranteed that I wouldn't be here writing this article.

The next thing I remember was being on the ground, with a ringing noise in my head and the warm feeling of blood running down my face. I looked up at my buddy, and saw how scared he looked while he held his tee-shirt against my forehead. My first instinct was to get up, but he insisted I stayed seated on the ground. Wondering how serious the situation was, I asked "Can you see my skull or anything that looks like bone?" When he replied "No," my thought was "It's not that bad. Let's get to the cabin so I can clean it up and possibly glue it shut." OK, I know— not the best idea.



After seeing how bad it was and that I did need professional medical help, we decided to go to the Emergency Room. Before leaving, I had him check my pupils to ensure they were still reactive, and the concussion wasn't critical. The closest ER was an hour away, and we agreed it would be faster to drive ourselves down to Cedar City. He told me not to bleed all over his truck. I said I would try, but couldn't promise anything.

We arrived at the hospital, and I walked in, still bleeding from my face. The young lady at the front desk said "Oh wow! What happened?" I replied "I woke up this morning with a tickle in my throat and thought I might have covid. I was wondering if you have any rapid tests?" I laughed a little, and she realized I was joking and chuckled, saying "Let's take care of your forehead first." I laughed and agreed that would be best.

The doctor and nurses cleaned the wounds, sent me for a CT scan, and put a total of 16 stitches in my forehead and right cheek. They gave me some instructions and a prescription, and I was ready to head back up the mountain and get back to work. Come on—You think a tree falling on my face would

Looking back, I remember the hard lesson I learned that day. I should not have taken my hard hat off while I was still in a dangerous area or anywhere work was being performed. The hardhat would have prevented me from needing stitches and possibly the trip to the ER altogether. The laceration under my right eye was caused when the tree pushed my safety glasses into my cheek. It required five stitches, but the safety glasses saved my eye. I'll take a small cut over losing an eye any day.

There is a reason we have rules in place. It is critical to wear personal protective equipment and to keep it on the whole time. When you think the job is done, and you're ready to kick back with a cold drink and enjoy the rest of the day, remember the job isn't done until you have left the iob

site. This is an important fact that I allowed to take a backseat, and that simple mistake almost cost me my life.





THIS Not Spills

BY TSGT GABRIELLE L. MURRAY

he day was drawing to a close as we raced down the mountain. We felt the chilling wind push against us, but our jackets broke the bite. The glare from the sunset's reflection on the pure white snow made the trail ahead difficult to see. Our destination just ahead was visible, but what lay beyond was a mystery. It had been a great day of snowboarding with friends in the Poconos.

As we made our way down the mountain, we decided to hit the empty terrain park one last time. We had done it dozens of times—what could go wrong? While the rest of us hung back, one friend got ready to hit the first jump. He leaned forward to accelerate, and launched off the jump. It was too late to stop when he realized the afternoon's falling temperatures had turned the melted snow into a sheet of ice. He's going to land it; maybe he's going to land it; we hope he's going to land it; what if he doesn't land it ...





Tips for Safe Snowboarding/Skiing

- Invest in quality gear before hitting the slopes. Whether you are a novice or expert rider, be sure to have a proper helmet, goggles, wrist guards, knee pads, waterproof outerwear, warm gloves, and thermal base layers. Going without any of these protective items can make you feel more stylish as you shred through the mountains, but you will regret not having them if something goes wrong.
- In mountainous regions, weather conditions can change rapidly. Always stay informed about the weather forecast, and pay attention to any warnings or advisories issued by the resort or local authorities. High winds, ice, blizzards, or poor visibility create hazardous situations. If conditions become unfavorable or dangerous, postpone your adventure, or hang out in the lodge with a cup of hot chocolate until conditions improve.
- Maintaining situational awareness is vital for safety. Always be mindful of other riders, skiers. and potential obstacles. Look out for warning signs, such as icy patches or sudden drops, and adjust your speed accordingly. Use hand and verbal signals when riding in groups, ensuring everyone is aware of each other's actions. Proper slope etiquette directly contributes to a safer experience for everyone.

- Understanding your skill level is paramount. Beginners should start on bunny slopes, and progress to more difficult terrains only as their comfort level and abilities improve. Avoid attempting jumps and tricks beyond your capabilities. Ignoring your personal limitations puts you and other snowboarders at risk.
- Winter sports are physically demanding, and it's important to spend time doing light stretching exercises to prevent muscle strains or pulls.
- Staying hydrated throughout the day is vital for maintaining performance and preventing fatigue. Drink plenty of water to replenish fluids lost through physical exertion and exposure to cold temperatures.

It is easy to get so caught up in the rush of this invigorating winter wonderland escape that you forget what is at stake—your life. No one ever plans to get hurt, but it happens. Snowboarding always involves the risk of injury. By equipping yourself properly, staying aware of your surroundings. following guidelines, and knowing your limits, you can mitigate these risks for yourself and others. Stay safe out there, and have a thrilling ride!

Danger in the Rink

ce hockey is a game I really enjoy. I love watching the Tampa Bay Lightning play, and imagine being like the players out on the ice. I remember the first time I stepped onto the rink with a stick in my hand: I was nervous, excited, and a little scared, all at once. Ice hockey always had been one of those sports that fascinated me, and I couldn't wait to try it for myself. As I skated around the rink, getting used to the slick surface and the weight of my equipment, I felt a surge of adrenaline. It was like nothing I ever had experienced before. I was hooked.

As I began to play actual games, I quickly realized ice hockey wasn't just a fun sport—it also was a dangerous one. The other players were fast, aggressive, and not afraid to use their bodies to knock me off the puck. At first, I was hesitant to really engage in the game, afraid that I would get hurt. But as time went on, I grew more comfortable on the ice. I learned how to skate backwards, how to make quick turns, and how to position myself to defend against the other team. One day, though, I made a mistake during a particularly intense game that could have been disastrous.

While

skating backwards, trying to keep the other team from

scoring, I felt something hit the back of my leg. I hadn't seen it coming, and realized too late that one of the other players had fallen, and the blade of his

BY SSGT GERALD E. BETZ, JR.

skate had cut my leg. It was a scary moment, but I was lucky the injury wasn't very serious. I was able to get off the ice and receive first aid, but the

incident left me shaken.

Looking back, I realize that there were a few things I could have done differently to prevent the injury. For one, I should have been more aware of my surroundings, and paid closer attention to where the other players were on the ice. I also should have made sure that my hockey pants were properly fitted and maintained, to minimize the risk of accidents like this one. But most importantly,

Photo by Ruslan Shevchenko/Shutterstock.com

I should have prioritized my own safety above winning the game. From that experience, I learned a valuable lesson about the importance of safety in sports. Whether you're playing ice hockey, football, or any other contact sport, it's crucial to take steps to protect yourself and those around you.

Here are a few tips for anyone interested in playing ice hockey:

• Wear the proper equipment. Equipment should include gloves, shin pads, shoulder pads, elbow pads, hip pads or padded hockey pants, protective cup, tendon pads plus all head protective equipment as required by USA Hockey rules.

- Take care of your equipment. Regularly sharpen your skate blades, and check your gear for any signs of wear and tear. Replace any damaged or worn-out equipment as soon as possible.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Always keep an eye on the other players on the ice, and make sure that you're not putting yourself in harm's way. Be especially cautious when skating backwards.
- Prioritize safety over winning. It's easy to get caught up in the competitive spirit of the game, but it's important to remember that your health and well-being should come first. Don't take unnecessary risks, and don't let the desire to win cloud your judgement.

Playing ice hockey has been one of the most thrilling and rewarding experiences of my life. It also has taught me the importance of being safe, both on and off the ice. By taking the right precautions and prioritizing our own safety, we can all enjoy the game to its fullest, without putting ourselves or others at risk.





Projectile Toys—Projectile toys such as air rockets, darts and sling shots are for older children. Improper use of these toys can result in serious eye injury.

Chargers and Adapters —Charging batteries should be supervised by adults. Chargers and adapters can pose thermal burn hazards to children.



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he worst time of year for motorcycle enthusiasts is almost upon us—winter. While many choose to stash their bikes for the winter season, there are still plenty of stalwart riders out there who keep riding despite cold and harsh conditions. Here are some tips for staying safe this winter on your motorcycle.

PAY ATTENTION TO DEXTERITY IN YOUR HANDS

When prioritizing winter gear, focus on keeping your hands warm with heated gloves, heated grips, and wind guards for your hands. If you're out on the road and your hands start to become stiff and numb from cold, stopping to run some warm water over your hands or holding them under an air hand dryer can help restore blood flow to your fingertips.

WATCH FOR SALT AND NEW BREAKS IN PAVEMENT FROM PLOWING

Salt causes a loss of traction, often in the worst places. It can pile up in corners, on the shoulder, and in the middle of lanes, eliminating traction in areas you need it most.

In addition to salt on the road, look out for hazards like new potholes and cracks in the pavement caused by snowplow trucks and salt erosion. These can cause damage to rims and tires, or even lead to accidents.

3 KEEP EYES PEELED FOR BLACK ICE

This dark and deceptive substance appears to be a wet surface but is actually a razorthin layer of ice that will put you down before you realize what happened. The best way to avoid black ice is to always avoid wet-looking road surfaces if temps are below 38° F.

MAXIMIZE VISIBILITY AND INCREASE FOLLOWING DISTANCE

While riding in the winter, increase your visibility by looking farther down the road to see hazards with plenty of time to react. A good rule of thumb is to look 15 seconds ahead.

Increase following distance. You'll want to have enough space in between you and the vehicle ahead to see hazards in the lane in time to react accordingly without having to make abrupt movements.

ALWAYS AVOID SNOWY PAVEMENT

If it starts to snow, get home right away. Avoid riding on days where there's even a slight chance of snow. But if you're someone who can't turn down a winter adventure, putting some studded tires on your bike can make safer snow riding a possibility.

WITH COLDER WEATHER COMES COLDER TIRES

Cold weather means colder tires, which equates to a reduction in traction even if the pavement is totally dry and salt-free. Trying to warm tires by weaving back and forth in the lane doesn't work. The best method is to accelerate and decelerate quickly for a few minutes when the road surface is dry and salt-free

PREPPING YOUR MOTORCYCLE

Mounting a bigger windscreen, handguards, and wind deflectors for your legs will help you get much better use of any heated riding gear you're wearing. Keeping your extremities warm and fully flexible is incredibly important in the winter when having fast reaction times can be the difference between keeping upright or not.

If you have a motorcycle with a water-cooled motor, be sure it has antifreeze that is fresh and mixed properly for colder weather. Be sure your hoses are in good condition, free from cracks or dry rotting.

KEEP YOUR PHONE IN PLAIN SIGHT

Mount your phone where you can easily see weather maps or Waze reports of slippery roads. This can add a higher degree of awareness in the cold.