How Would You Check Three?

Give it your best shot!

Send your submission to:
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The United States Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron has a proud history that stretches more than 60 years. Since the team’s inception in 1953, more than 350 million people in all 50 states and more than 60 countries have witnessed the distinctive red, white and blue jets in thousands of aerial demonstrations.

Our history has reflected the development of American air power from the team’s first aircraft, the Republic Aviation F-84F Thunderjet, to the F-84G Thunderstreak, F-100 Super Sabre, F-105 Thunderchief, F-100 Super Sabre, F-4 Phantom, T-38 Talon and finally to its current use of the Lockheed Martin F-16 Fighting Falcon. Although the names, faces and aircraft have changed over the years, the team’s reason for being has remained constant: to plan and present air demonstrations exhibiting the capabilities of the Air Force combat aircraft while displaying the professional skill of those who fly and maintain those aircraft.

During our demonstrations, thousands of spectators experience a combination of precision capabilities of Air Force pilots through the four-ship Diamond maneuvers and the performance capabilities of the F-16 through the solo profile. Some may not realize how much pride, precision and professionalism is put into each demonstration for the air shows and ensuring the safety of all viewers.
We view our mission as a no-fail mission due to the close proximity we fly to each other and to hundreds of thousands of spectators. Any misstep or unaccounted for contingency could have catastrophic results. Hence, flight and ground safety is the Thunderbirds’ number one priority in both the training and show seasons.

The team’s unique mission is a simultaneous combination of the challenges that every flying squadron faces. Our aircrew fly at very low altitudes (as low as 150 feet above the ground), at very high speeds (up to 0.94 Mach or about 700 miles per hour), and on the very edge of the F-16’s performance envelope at a distance apart best measured in inches. All of this topped with an extremely high operations tempo and a new show site layout every week makes for a challenging environment that absolutely requires the prioritization of flight and crowd safety.

That being said, the application of the Air Force’s safety principles is fundamentally the same. The process starts in the training season where new demonstration pilots are trained in a familiar building-block approach wherein they decrease altitude and separation minimums as they demonstrate proficiency. New pilots always fly with the pilot they are replacing in the two-seat “D” model variant as new maneuvers are introduced and whenever additional detailed instruction is needed. Each new pilot flies initially in a two-ship, then a three-ship, and then a four-ship as the “Diamond” comes together. The solos are eventually added to form the “Delta,” offering increased complexity with regards to five- and six-ship maneuvering, rejoin, and timing. This building block approach provides a graduated degree of difficulty and complexity throughout the progression of the training season.

Through our 60-year history, the team has developed an extensive operations manual, directing how each maneuver will be flown. Every diamond and solo maneuver has required entry and exit parameters, minimum “on-top” altitudes and speeds, and abort criteria that are analyzed during every debrief. The team always has a range safety officer present to monitor the practice and ensure compliance with the minimum “on-top” parameters. All practices using a floor of less than 2,000’ above ground level (AGL) require filming from a ground crew. Camera and heads up display footage for every practice are saved and reviewed by 57 WG and USAF Warfare Center leadership to provide an external perspective on the team’s performance and oversight on altitude step-down approval.

Once the show season begins, these practices continue and are the foundation upon which the new “road” challenges are tackled. The constant out-and-back schedule to new show sites requires typical cross-country contingency planning and, more specific to the team, a detailed imagery study of the show site and a live-fly site survey upon the team’s arrival. Accurate plotting of towers, factories, buildings, terrain, no-fly areas, and crowd safety lines are critical to a safe and successful show. These considerations are briefed both before departing Nellis Air Force Base (to prepare for the site survey) and before the practice show. When these risk mitigation measures can’t prevent the inevitable bird strike or aircraft emergency, the team responds like every other Air Force squadron, but with the additional factor of crowd safety.
the aircraft’s energy away from the crowd during maneuvers and emergencies, and if landing with the emergency condition would pose a risk to the crowd, a preplanned divert base may be used.

All of the above is considered and weighed before every mission via a normal operational risk management (RM) process that is tailored to the team’s unique considerations. Thunderbird missions are just as physically and mentally demanding as any Combat Air Force training sortie and require aircrew to be honest with themselves and each other about their capabilities on any given day. Electronic ORM worksheets are filled out before briefing, discussed in detail, and required for flight. The factors considered are very detailed and include show and maneuver currency, which part of the show season the team is currently in, urban versus rural versus overwater sites, density altitude for aircraft performance, and weather. Personal factors include fatigue, hydration and nutrition, stress at work or home, and even recent illness. As the risk factor increases, the Commander/Leader will emphasize the higher-risk areas of the show and discuss mitigation measures with the pilots to include modifying the profile or not flying certain maneuvers. At even higher levels or when faced with the worst weather conditions, the 57th Wing leadership must be involved in approving a reduction in our ceiling minimums.

At all times the safety of the pilots and spectators are paramount, and though the team strives for the perfect show it is always clear that an air show is just a demonstration. Even if a demo maneuver needs to be aborted or a show needs to be cancelled the Thunderbird team is always proud to demonstrate its reverence for the value of the lives in the cockpits and on the ground!
You’re Using It For Play ...

It Also Works At Work ...
... it works well for ALL you do!
Checklist Discipline

Earlier this year, during a MQ-1 takeoff roll, the GCS lost all downlink signals and went lost link. The aircraft continued down the runway, then veered to the side and exited the runway, eventually coming to a stop in the dirt. The aircraft was a total loss. The culprit? A failure to set the designated uplink frequency after power-up (from the default frequency) and a subsequent frequency conflict with another aircraft. Why? Poor checklist discipline resulting in a missed step.

Recently, poor checklist discipline has been an issue in several aircraft accidents. How do we mitigate this scourge? A few key techniques help ensure checklists are accomplished completely and in a timely manner.

- **Slow is Smooth; Smooth is Fast**
  Complete checklists in a methodical, effective manner every time, all the time.

- **Be Professional, Proficient**
  The more familiar you are with your duties and checklists, the more you will recognize when a checklist step is skipped, done out of order, or done incorrectly.

- **Be Paranoid**
  As aircrew, we should all have developed a healthy paranoia of missing something. Whenever you are interrupted in the midst of a checklist (answering a radio call, rushed on a compressed timeline, or seeing something in the tactical situation requiring closer scrutiny), recognize the interruption. Go back to the last confirmed completed checklist item and start from that step.

- **Rely on Checklists**
  RPA launch and recovery operations are a classic example of complex, yet repetitive operations that often lead to complacency and missed steps in execution. To combat this threat, the Dash One spells out highly disciplined and scripted checklist execution procedures. Specifically, the Dash One states: “The SO is responsible for reading the checklist aloud, ensuring each step is performed before proceeding to the next step, and calling the checklist complete.”

- **Acknowledge Limitations of MQ-1/9 Checklists**
  NASA recommends all critical steps of a checklist be checked at least once later in the checklist. Our checklists are not as thorough as this. Recognize these limitations and be extremely careful not to miss any checklist items.

- **Debrief Missed Steps**
  Realizing you skipped a checklist step should scare you. Chances are it is not the only one missed and that an entire section was skipped. In fact, this crew missed several checklist items. Noticing any anomaly requires a full review of the checklist and your process! It comes down to discipline!

**Checklist Discipline comes down to the second word: Discipline. Have it!**

BY MAJ. STOLI

"Aviation in itself is not inherently dangerous. But to an even greater degree than the sea, it is terribly unforgiving of carelessness, incapacity, or neglect."

Anonymous

It was true then ... and it still is today. **FLY SAFE!**
On Flight Safety

BY COL. DONALD BORCHELT

After three years leading the Flight Safety program here and at USAFE, I reflect back on the scores of aviation mishaps of all categories that have transpired, and, as I leave the full-time flight safety staff returning to fly airplanes for my seventh flying assignment, I wanted to attempt to roll up 20 years of my personal reflections on flight safety. While researching the subject, I came across a fascinating look at the topic written in 1914. That’s right, NINETEEN FOURTEEN. I was floored at how such insightful observations, gained from a mere 11 years of powered flight, still resonate so clearly today. Since they were written in the seminal days of aviation, and still bear such relevance today, I don’t think it’s a stretch to call these eternal truths of flight safety. Now, to be clear, this book was written a century ago … so believe it or not, they actually debated the merits of having seatbelts in airplanes. Still, it’s so eloquently written, and so thought-provoking, that I thought I’d fold some of those very early observations into a few nuggets of completely unoriginal wisdom you hopefully find applicable today. With that in mind, let’s take a look at what was said back in the early days of fabric wings and open cockpits.

Gustav Hamel preparing for take off at Trengwainton

Mr. Gustav Hamel ‘looping-the-loop’ before the King and Queen at Windsor on February 2, 1914

The machine is seen upside down, the white rings being painted on the top of the plane.
Nugget #1: There's no mistake you can't make. On my 3rd sortie in the Flight Screening Program (FSP) in the T-3, I was re-entering the traffic pattern, and had the instructor not taken the airplane, I would have flown right into another T-3 already established on downwind. I never would've thought in a million years how it is possible to look directly at another airplane but not see it. I later learned the phenomenon was caused precisely because of our collision course: there was no line-of-sight movement. The airplane was getting bigger, but was stationary on my canopy. In retrospect, it was a great lesson to learn very early on and has stuck with me to this day. Our mishap statistics support this nugget ... we have crews with all levels of experience which make what would be considered “basic” mistakes of failing to SEE AND AVOID. So, if I find myself reading mishap reports, and failing into the trap of thinking: “that could never happen to me,” I think back to that day 22 years ago and it helps me guard against complacency and overconfidence. Mr. Hamel said: “It is the simplest thing in the world to fly an airplane after a fashion—to fly well is quite another matter—and the chief difficulty is that of resisting every temptation to become momentarily careless.” P 3-4.

Nugget #2: Sweat the small stuff. Looking back at the recent mishaps in 2015, virtually all occurred in what should have been fairly benign, low threat, administrative phases of flight. One may expect the “variety level” Large Force Exercises (LFEs) like Red Flag or Northern Edge to drive mishap stats, but it’s simply not the case. Pilots need to take the time to review the admin performance, and that of their flight members, to ensure strict adherence to the admin standards set forth in their operational procedures. I know time is precious and you've got plenty "more important" tactical things to debrief. Don't overlook the mistakes on "small stuff"; share them with others. Said Hamel: "Every pilot could relate, out of his experience, a number of what might have been serious incidents caused by small and absurd oversights." P 49

Nugget #3: You are ultimately accountable. No one knows how you feel except you. Make sure you’re healthy, rested, and fit to fly; and take a knee if you’re not. If your jet is not “full-up” based on your mission requirements, call the red-ball and get it fixed. Or, if it’s still not happening, call the ground abort and step to the spare. Mr. Hamel said: “It requires moral courage to decline to fly in fulfillment of a promise, but flying being an occupation in which a trivial cause may have a serious effect, moral courage is one of the necessary parts of an aviator’s character. Yet many a man, feeling slightly out of condition himself, or discovering that his motor is running weakly, attempts a flight in the hope that the human or the mechanical engine, as the case may be, will recover after a few minutes in the air.” P 54

Nugget #4: Study previous mishaps. The first books I read when I got to pilot training were the “Road to Wings.” In doing so, I learned the most common pitfalls encountered by others in their journey to earn the coveted Air Force wings of silver. Squadron flight safety officers should pull some mishaps out of the Safety database and teach the squadron on a recurring basis. Otherwise, after a couple years, the valuable lessons learned are relegated to the dustbin of history; and there is no greater disservice to the sacrifice of those upon whose shoulders we stand than to forget their final instruction to us. On this topic, Mr. Hamel has this to say: “By far the greater number of airplane accidents are due to precisely the same circumstances that have caused previous accidents. A distressing feature of these accidents is the evidence of resisting every temptation to become momentarily careless.” P 48

Nugget #5: You’re not a test pilot*. The average age of the Air Force fleet is 27 years ... so almost all of us are flying airplanes with known flight characteristics, fully developed technical orders and Dash-1s, and pages and pages of TTP. The entirety of these documents describes a thoroughly understood flight envelope, within which pilots enjoy significant safety margins to accomplish their assigned mission. Yet to this day, we receive reports of airplane whose discipline breaks down and they try something ‘new’ with their airplane or demand aircraft performance that very clearly lies well outside the envelope. When one displays lack of knowledge of their aircraft operating limits, or worse, breaks the rules, your only hope now is to get lucky. Don’t be the guy to start a bar fight between your jet, Bernoulli, and Newton. Next time you consider trying something in your airplane simply because you can’t find any rule prohibiting it, or are curious to see what may happen, remember this: “If flying, far more even than golf or anything else, it may be possible to look directly at another airplane but not see it. It will be so safe that we shall hear no more of the same circumstances that have caused previous accidents.” P 54

Nugget #6: Fight like you train. This is the 2nd half of possibly the most famous cliché in the AF. It implies that in combat, you’re only as effective as the applied sum of your preceding training. While true, there’s a deeper meaning that speaks directly to safety in combat. Unfortunately, there have been several recent mishaps caused by aircrew accepting unnecessary risk during contingency ops. Mistakenly, ATO lines carry, for some, a misplaced connotation of “anything goes.” Nothing could be further from the truth. It is for this very reason we take so much pride in striving for perfection during our training … so that we can achieve perfection during combat, come home as heroes, and regale each other with tall tales of intrepidity.

Remember, if we bend an airplane, we’re doing the enemy’s job for him. If your Spidey senses are filling you with doubt and you think you need to bend the rules to accomplish your mission, tell someone. You’re angst is probably well-placed, and you may be accepting more risk than the man wants you to. In almost all scenarios there are ways of getting the mission done another way.

* Test pilots are authorized to take this paragraph with a grain of salt.
Actual ASAP Submission. This event did not result in a mishap, but provides valuable information worthy of sharing.

Narrative: The crew had just landed and was in the process of conducting an Engine Running Crew Change with the parking brake set. Ground was standing outside on comm, and the back enders were transitioning in and out from the rotor disk swapping gear and loading ammo. Winds that day were extremely strong, gusting >40kts, and based on the parking orientation, this resulted in a pure right cross. The IP monitoring the controls suddenly noticed the aircraft lurch, in a spinning motion with the nose coming right and the tail going left. At this point he immediately applied full left pedal, but the aircraft did not respond. The aircraft began a slow spin again, with no response from the pedal input, the IP yelled to everyone to either get in the cabin or immediately exit the rotor disk. At this point, the crew did as he directed, and Ground immediately ran out of the rotor disk, inadvertently pulling chocks as he went, which only caused the spin to increase.

With personnel near the aircraft and a ground power cart just outside the rotor disk, the IP assessed his two options were to either pull into a hover or to execute an emergency shutdown. His immediate thought was that pulling it into a hover may exacerbate the situation ... additionally, training drives us to not turn a ground emergency into an air emergency. He conducted the Boldface for the Emergency Aircraft Shutdown, which effectively ceased aircraft movement.

It was assessed that the cause of the spin was due to the direct crosswind resulting in loss of tail rotor effectiveness, coupled with a faulty Tail Wheel lock indication. The Tail Wheel Pin was indicating locked, but in fact was not. Furthermore, the crew chief pulling chocks (assumed to be done on account of muscle memory), enabled the spin to increase. Ultimately no damage or injury occurred, and the AC came to rest about 45 degrees out of position on the parking pad.

Do you have a lesson learned to share? http://safety-masap.com

THE DARK NIGHT

BY LT. COL. KATHRYN NELSON

The mishap flight was a 2-ship “Red Air” mission at night. There was a weather deck below at 5,000’ MSL but the planned block 20,000’ to 24,000’ was clear. As the pilot started a 3 to 4 G turn, the nose dropped to 60 degrees low. The pilot shifted his scan to the HUD and outside the cockpit while reducing the dive and pulling the nose up to 30 degrees nose low. As the pilot searched for visual references, the aircraft started a slight roll. The aircraft was inverted and 45 degrees nose low when the pilot pulled back on the stick to arrest the descent. The aircraft barrel rolled twice as the pilot banked and 90 degrees in attempts to level the aircraft. At less than 2,000’ MSL and unable to stabilize the aircraft, the pilot ejected. The mishap aircraft was destroyed but the pilot was uninjured. Less than 45 seconds elapsed from the initial turn until the aircraft impacted the ground.

At the conclusion of the tactical portion of a 4-ship training sortie, the flight lead directed flight spacing with #2 to drag to 1.5NM trail. During this night sortie, the weather was mostly clear with some haze at medium altitudes and high winds aloft. To take spacing, the pilot initiated an aggressive climb to the left. Topping out above 23,000’ MSL, the pilot recognized an unusual attitude and attempted a recovery. The initial 10-degree nose low dive to recover quickly increased to more than 45-degrees nose low and 160-degrees of bank. The pilot removed NVGs and initiated an instrument recovery to level off just below 10,000’ MSL. The pilot rejoined the flight and recovered uneventfully.

Due to maintenance delay, the pilot rushed ground ops to stay with his flight and took off with incorrect settings for the planned radar assisted trail departure as #6 of the 6-ship. The pilot did not get the HUD indications that he expected to see to assist his rejoin and tried to visually acquire his element lead. Due to the black hole effect at night, the pilot mistook a ground light for his lead and began to fly the rejoin visually. Seconds later, the pilot recognized the radar information conflicted with his visual “target” and he recovered from the unusual attitude via instruments in max AB. The pilot and element lead rejoined, burned down gas and landed uneventfully.

In these three events, thankfully, the aircrew all safely recovered and only one combat asset was lost. Not all Airmen have been as fortunate to encounter and then overcome spatial disorientation at night. We have a tendency to be extra alert during bad weather days to the threat of spatial d. However, overconfidence or complacency can make night flying even more susceptible, during either tactical maneuvers or admin phases of flight. Be alert and respect the dark night!
Foreign Object Damage

BY MASTER SGT. JEFFREY STULL

Foreign objects have been a nuisance contributor to mishaps involving powered flight since Orville Wright hit a bird while flying circles over a field near Dayton, Ohio. Examples of foreign objects are wildlife, tools, loose hardware, or any item introduced to an aircraft that should not be there. AF maintainers conduct FOD walks daily on the flight line to reduce the possibility of foreign objects finding their way into an aircraft and causing a mishap. Furthermore, the maintenance discipline of accounting for all aircraft hardware, pins, and covers prior to engine start can go a long way to preventing these types of mishaps. The following two mishaps detail two scenarios where poor FOD control procedures cost $2.3M worth of damage.

All aircraft utilize safety pins to secure aircraft covers and to safe areas of the aircraft before and after flight. During preparation for flight, a maintenance crew removed all required aircraft covers and pins except those that require removal by the aircrew. Once the aircrew arrived on the spot, the maintainer assisted the aircrew with the removal of the remainder of the pins and covers. Unbeknownst to the aircrew or maintainer, one of the pins from the cockpit had fallen in-between the fuselage and the aircraft intake. The aircraft was allowed to taxi without full accountability of all pins and covers. Shortly after takeoff roll, the aircrew heard a loud bang. There were no abnormal engine indications, but maintenance members observed sparks and debris being expelled from the exhaust of the aircraft. T otal mishap cost associated with the foreign objects introduced to the engine area prior to taxi would have contributed to mitigating the hazard of the aircraft. The B-man struggled to untangle the safing pins a mere 10 feet from the intake lip of the running engine. While trying to unwrap the pins, several of the pins fell to the ground. The B-man quickly picked up what he thought were all of the pins that he had dropped. It was only after the aircraft had shut down that maintainers discovered a pin was missing. The maintainers immediately initiated a search for the missing pin. After about an hour of searching, a qualified technician arrived to perform an intake and exhaust inspection. The maintainers conducting the search notified the technician of the missing pin. During the intake inspection of the left engine, the technician noted remnants of a Remove Before Flight streamer. Quality Assurance documented damage to the first and second stage inlet blades. Fragments of metal were also found in the left engine’s exhaust as well as on the pavement behind the aircraft. The technician noted the high winds on the day of the mishap allowed the foreign object to be sucked up into the engine. The total cost of this mishap was $500K. This mishap also could have been prevented. Maintaining control and accountability of the aircraft safing pins in a pin bag would have contributed to mitigating the hazard of the loose pins. Furthermore, untying the pins in a location that is not at risk for entering an intake would have prevented the foreign object from entering the engine.

The Unintended Cost of Mishaps

BY MASTER SGT. DAVID INGRAM

Looking back over fiscal year 15, ACC was responsible for $750,664.00 in explosives safety mishap costs and 10 lost work days. Over 54 percent of the total mishap cost was related to missile mishaps; all other mishap categories accounted for the balance. Total costs has risen from the previous fiscal year, up $40,135 from 2014. Of note, one aircraft gun replacement engulfed more than half of last years’ total. Even though total mishaps in 2015 were reduced from 2014, the total cost was greater. To most of us, those are large sums of money. However, it likely goes unnoticed since we don’t have to pay the tab. Continued waste of that magnitude cannot simply be considered resources, but also the warfighting mission.

Let’s focus on 2015 for a moment; there were a total of 16 mishaps. Nine were missile mishaps (6ea Aim/CATM-9s, 1ea AGM-65, and 2ea CATM-120s). The majority of these mishaps were related to Human Factors (complacency or not following technical orders). Over the past few years, Human Factors have led as causal in explosive mishaps. We understand the Air Force has faced a reduction in force which may contribute to increased workload, but we still have to maintain a high level of risk management and mishap prevention. One mistake can greatly impact our mission.

Decreasing mishaps can save the Air Force money which will leave more money in the fiscal budget for areas that are critically underfunded. Based on my calculations, 2015 mishap costs could pay the basic salary of a four-year Staff Sergeant, a three-year Senior Airman, and a two-year Airman First Class combined, for more than nine years! Can you imagine the cost to the mission if mishap costs were inversely tied to manning in this way? In some sense it is. All about having money to pay for resources. Manning is a resource. Ask yourself, “What you can do to help mitigate risk?” My suggestion would be to ensure you operate in a safe environment. Take pride and have a vested interest in managing resources. Study your technical information before starting any explosive operation. Familiarize yourself with all associated risks in the area and in your surroundings. Ensure you have all tools, equipment and PPE before you start the operation. Provide a safety briefing to each and every individual related to the explosive operation. Most importantly, take your time. Most mishaps are caused when individuals are rushing and steps are not done properly or even missed.

I take my hat off to you all for doing such a wonderful job supporting our mission. Stay proficient and maintain high standards in your profession. We appreciate all that you do to keep us safe!
Aircrew Safety Awards of Distinction


Capt Bryan J. Hladik and LtI Benjamin P. Bowman – 336 FS, 4 FW, Seymour Johnson AFB, N.C. (December 2015)


Crew Chief Safety Awards of Distinction

SSgt Daniel M. Kealy – 23 AMXS, 23 WG, Moody AFB, Ga. (December 2015)

SSgt Alex M. Austin – 1 EAMXS, 332 AEW, Dyirbarik AB, Turkey (January 2016)

Flight Line Safety Awards of Distinction

Tsgt Eddie T. Flores – 9 MXG, 9 RW, Beale AFB, Calif. (November 2015)

SSgt Kevin D. Holland – 34 WPS, 57 WG, Nellis AFB, Nev. (December 2015)

Capt Roland R. Holland, Jr. – 379 EOSS, 379 AEW, Al Udeid AB, Qatar (January 2016)

Ground Safety Awards of Distinction


Tsgt Jeffery S. Harris – 552 OSS, 552 ACW, Tinker AFB, Okla. (January 2016)

Pilot Safety Awards of Distinction

Capt Gray A. Kenepf – 99 RS, 9 RW, Beale AFB, Calif. (November 2015)

Maj Kevin Belcher – 57 WG, Nellis AFB, Nev. (December 2015)

Capt Michael N. Napolitano – 55 EFS, 557 ACW, Muwaffaq Salti AB, Jordan (January 2016)

Unit Safety Awards of Distinction

99th Reconnaissance Squadron – 9 RW, Beale AFB, Calif. (November 2015)

9th Munitions Squadron – 9 RW, Beale AFB, Calif. (January 2016)

Weapons Safety Awards of Distinction


Ssgt Austin T. Dallymple – 23 SFS, 23 WG, Moody AFB, Ga. (December 2015)

Tsgt Shaina M. Hernandez and SrA Colin P. Ziegler – 55 EHMJ, 332 AEW, Dyirbarik AB, Turkey (January 2016)
ACC’s streak of zero Class A and B mishaps continues. December was another good month; however, we did experience one Class D and one Class E mishap. Luckily we avoided injury to personnel. Lack of attention to detail was causal. It’s evident that your vigilance and oversight is paying dividends. Continue to emphasize attention to details in all aspects of your program and operations. ACC wants to thank you for your hard work and vital roles in promoting the mishap prevention program.

After a year which returned the aircraft mishap rate to a more historical average, the first quarter of FY2016 began a slightly improving trend. In the first three months of the fiscal year, the Air Force lost three MQ-1s and one MQ-9. Additionally, another MQ-9 mishap, currently under investigation, may reach the Class A threshold. Fortunately, ACC experienced no aircrew fatalities during the period. As you attend periodic safety meetings, read Combat Edge articles, and review recent mishaps, ensure they inspire you to maintain the constant focus required to perform the mission safely and effectively.

Our first two fatalities of the year involved vehicles traveling at speeds above the posted speed limit—willful non-compliance. The Air Force goes through great lengths to drive home the point that speed, alcohol and driving or motorcycling is a deadly mix. Although our motorcycle training program is world-class, and comprehensive safe driving initiatives have been implemented, we continue to suffer losses. These initiatives work well as long as good decisions are made both early and in the moment. No one is immune from bad decisions; however, we must practice good choice management as we combat vehicle and motorcycle fatalities. Let’s rally against non-compliance and make sound decisions in all we do!

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Ground Notes

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Weapons Notes

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Check 3 is a quick and easy method to assess any activity or event for possible hazards. The “Check 3” approach is assessing three areas referenced by the common acronym GPS. In this case, GPS is not referencing a navigation aid. Rather, GPS is: Gear - Plan - Skills. This allows a quick review of your activity to highlight any issues or hazards. For instance, “G” (gear) may be your equipment, vehicle, or availability of drinking water. “P” (plan) may be the timeline, weather, sequence, and backup plans. “S” (skills) may be your rest level or overall experience level. If you see an issue or hazard in any of the areas, adjust an area to mitigate the hazard, especially the plan. Check 3 allows you to have a quick mental method to assess any activity.

*What is Check Three you ask?*

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*Enjoy the weather ... Remember to Check 3 in all you do.*
The Panama Canal has been heralded as one of the many wonders of the modern world. It took 10 years to build with a price tag of $375 million, which in today’s dollars would be nearly $9 billion. Each year an estimated 12,000-15,000 ships cross the canal, shaving more than 7,800 extra miles traveled if the canal didn’t exist. The savings created from such a huge shortcut benefits anyone who has ever purchased, well, anything. And while it is credited as pure American awesomeness, the canal has quite an interesting history.

Americans weren’t the first to try to tame the mountains and jungles of Panama. Some might know that the French started digging in the late 1800s, but Scotland was one of the first to attempt the shortcut. In the late 1600s, Scotland wanted to get into the empire business and Panama offered a great economic advantage. The narrow continental bridge would serve as a land crossing and provide access to a quick route between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. With very little forethought, nearly a quarter million Scotsmen packed up and shipped out across the Atlantic. The initial cost of the endeavor was 20 percent of Scotland’s wealth. A risky venture to be sure, and almost immediately, the travelers discovered some problems with their plan.

Like the inquisition, Scotland didn’t expect the Spanish to have already established a base of operations in the region. The sheep Scotland brought to Panama didn’t fare well in the jungle and what wool they could produce wasn’t exactly flying off of the shelves. To make matters worse, their dreams of easily crossing the minimal distance from one ocean to another proved impossible; the maps they used to plan the trip didn’t say anything about impassable mountains and disease-riddled jungles. By the time Scotland called it quits, 200,000 people died from disease and the money was gone. Their lesson in empire failure culminated in the Act of Union in 1707, when they became a part of the United Kingdom.
When it was someone else’s turn to conquer the canal, the French were ready with a proven plan: they would do the same thing they built with the Suez Canal. Riding on the success of that canal project, the French assumed what they had done in the past would work just as well in Panama. The project manager, Ferdinand de Lesseps, was so confident that he only visited the work site a handful of times during the entire 13 years of work and he expected the work to proceed without any blueprints.

The workforce was effectively told to go across the world and start digging until they hit the ocean or died. And, unfortunately, many of them did perish. In 1884, 200 people per month died from disease and on-site accidents. Excavated soil was simply dumped right next to the canal only to slide back in, slowing down the process and causing many accidents. Many of these deaths could have been prevented from minimal sanitation and infrastructure. If only they had more funding.

Shortly after excavation began, the budget exploded and the project was forced to seek investors. By 1894, the project cost $287 million and nearly 22,000 lives. For his ineptness and lack of forethought, Ferdinand was convicted of misappropriation of funds and sentenced to five years in prison. The failed canal would continue to be a reminder of poor planning until the U.S. stepped in and took over.

In 1904, planning on the new U.S.-driven canal began. Before the first shovel of dirt was removed, extensive research and surveying took place. A division of labor was established and sanitation was given high priority. When the first ship made its way through the canal less than 10 years after the excavation began, U.S. workers had removed nearly six times more material than the French and did so with only about 5,600 lives lost to disease or mishap.

With a slightly higher cost (a 26 percent increase) than what the French paid, American hard work and ingenuity finally connected the two oceans. (It is usually at this point that people begin chanting, “U.S.A., U.S.A., U.S.A.!”).

Did any of these groups talk about risk management? Maybe not using those words, but at some point, they all had to deal with the hazards and, more importantly, had to make decisions about how to proceed—safely.

As Airmen, we face hazards every day, and while most of them aren’t as daunting as taming Panama, they each have a way of affecting our lives. The question is, do we ignore the hazards and allow them to shape us, or do we plan for those hazards and cut a path to victory?
Countdown to the Critical Days of SUMMER

BY MR. RODNEY ROBINSON

As I think back over my decision, to put not only myself, but my family at risk, it was certainly not the right decision to make. So, I ask myself, what I could have done differently. First, I probably could have skipped fishing in the morning since I could do that any day we were at the lake. As for the other activities, I was trying to group things that were close together into one outing, and since driving doesn't make me sleepy, I really didn’t think about the time on the road. This takes me to the second thing I could have done differently. I should have made sure that I had a backup driver that was capable of driving—so I could take a break. Lots of folks tell me they are ready to take over driving, and the next thing I know, they are snoring louder than the radio. As the driver/leader of the trip, take it upon yourself to make good decisions … not only for you, but for the others in the vehicle with you and on the road. The decisions you make are critical to not only making it home safely, but also making it through the activity you are participating in safely. Sometimes it’s hard to look at all you have planned because you are so focused on doing the activities and you don’t step back and look at what could cause problems. We have all done things that we would probably do differently now. The key is how do you change that behavior? As summer approaches, let’s be vigilant with our activities and Check 3 GPS! Gear: Ensure car/vehicle is in good working condition—check tires, oil, have emergency supplies on hand. Don’t forget your PPE (depending on the activity). Always have a Plan: Preparation for any activity is a must! Have a timeline, check the weather, sequence of events, and even have a backup plan. Don’t forget to let someone know where you are going/ will be in case of emergency. Skill: Get the proper rest! Make sure your skills/experience are commensurate with the activity. Let’s all have a great time this summer, but take the time to step back and give whatever you’re doing a second look! Stay safe my friend!
Complacency describes the state of mind many people have with regard to safety. Unfortunately, we go about our lives giving little thought to our personal safety, or for that matter, the safety of others. Our superiors keep telling us that safety is important, but for many, it is discounted because of being overconfident or simply maintaining an attitude of “it isn’t going to happen to me.”

Too often, our Airmen become complacent with regards to drivers’ safety. Statistics show that the majority of traffic accidents occur within 10 miles of the driver’s home. Just when we feel the most comfortable in a routine or familiar situation—we let our guard down: that’s when it happens.

We all have a tendency toward taking the easiest route. It is just human nature to want to take the path of least resistance, the shortest or quickest route, one we know of or think we can create. When we are in a hurry and come up to an intersection and the light has been yellow; our instincts are to “punch that gas pedal”… it is a matter of impatience and not having to wait. We’re also in a hurry to get something done that we take safety shortcuts without thinking about the consequences.

Another instance is taking shortcuts by not wearing safety glasses when using the weed eater in edging the grass around sidewalks and trees. Every time a safety shortcut is taken and no one gets hurt, it reinforces the unsafe behavior, which encourages us to continue using that shortcut and to create even others.

Most injuries and fatalities, well over 90 percent by statistics, are not caused by unsafe conditions, but by unsafe acts. But, for whatever reason, we fail to eliminate unsafe behaviors until we get hurt — or someone else we know gets injured. The more unsafe behaviors we use without injuries, the more complacent we become.

• Leaders—Please Get Committed! It takes more than just saying you are committed to safety—you have to put actions behind your words. Leaders can demonstrate their commitment to safety in a variety of ways. First and foremost, leaders must always lead by example and look to weed out complacency.

• Take time to walk around and talk to our Airmen and their families. Visit Airmen in their workplaces whether on the flight line, shop floor, at the work site or in their offices. Talk about your personal concern for safety and listen to their concerns. Take personal action to correct unsafe situations.

• Integrate safety into all aspects of planning. During crew changeover, maintenance dispatches, and security force guard mounts review reports and discuss potential safety hazards that might occur. Take care to ensure that your focus is a positive action rather than a punitive one.

• Enable and encourage Airmen to get involved in the safety process. Identify areas where Airmen can become actively involved in the safety process and encourage their participation by allowing them to share their own activities and near mishaps. Then recognize their involvement and efforts with positive reinforcement. Airmen whose ideas and involvement are valued will increase safety performance faster than our Airmen who simply follow the rules. Encourage creative ideas from our Airmen—we must create a culture in the Air Force where injuries are a thing of the past. We cannot let our guard down—our people and our mission are too important to the nation! Yes, complacency is a dangerous thing—it can indeed be a killer!
### In The Driver’s Seat

**Making Smart Decisions – Tips to help protect you, your family, and others on the highways:**

**Have a Clear Head.** Ensure you always have a clear head before deciding to operate a motor vehicle. Alcohol and certain drugs, both illegal and legal, can severely impair your driving skills. Many prescription and over-the-counter medications can cause dangerous drowsiness. Get a good night’s rest, and don’t drive for long stretches without a break. If you are tired, don’t risk the safety of yourself and others on the highway by trying to drive.

**Limit Driving Alone When Tired.** Driving with someone else in the car can increase your overall alertness. It is well recognized that when driving alone, especially when sleep-deprived, and at night, your chances of a crash are dramatically increased.

**Plan Ahead.** Allow yourself plenty of extra time to reach your destination, and allow for emergencies or traffic jams. In today’s busy world, most of us are in a hurry to get where we are going. By allowing extra time, you can be more relaxed when operating our vehicles and thereby cut down on the incidences of road rage ... such as excessive speeding, tailgating, and weaving in and out between cars.

**Research Safety Features.** Safety should always be a top priority when shopping for a vehicle. Research the safety performance of any vehicle you are considering buying—including how the vehicle performs in crash tests. Both driver and passenger side air bags are mandatory in all new cars. Look for side impact bags in many new models as well. When buying a used vehicle, look for one with air bags. Research what type of safety systems are in the car, and choose the safest to protect you and your loved ones in the event of a collision.

**Relax.** Avoid aggressive driving by relaxing and having patience. By not being in such a rush to reach your destination, you’ll be a calmer person and better able to resist the temptation of speeding or running through red lights. And don’t forget ... a yellow light means to slow down, not speed up. Always stop at red lights.

**Be Alert to Signs of Fatigue.** If you start to feel tired when driving, pull over in a safe area and let someone else drive. If you are alone, pull into a safe location (such as a well lit rest stop), and take a short nap or get out of the car so you can walk around for a few minutes. Stop as often as necessary. When traveling on long trips, eat light. Large, heavy meals can make you drowsy.

**Practice Common Sense Safety Rules.** Always wear your seat belt and make sure all your passengers are buckled properly, even on short trips and with children. Secure children ages 12 and under are always buckled up in the back seat, the safest place to ride. If traveling with children, educate yourself on the many kinds of child safety seats and restraints. Choose which system is best for your child, and always follow the directions. Make sure children ages 12 and under are always buckled up in the back seat, the safest place to ride.

**Keep Your Eyes on the Road.** Avoid taking your eyes off the road by eliminating any possible distractions ahead of time. Before setting out on a drive, be sure that important items are within easy reach (i.e., directions and maps, sunglasses, etc.). Reduce any dangerous diversions of your attention from the task of safe driving—changing radio stations/CDs, texting, or cell phone use.

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### Rider’s Rap

The time is here and the dusting off of the bikes has commenced! Be sure you take all the necessary precautions, use proper personal protective equipment, complete required training, and Check 3 GPS (gear, plan, skills).

Whether you’re an everyday commuter or an adrenaline junky with a need for speed, know that motorcycles are more dangerous and require much more precaution than their four-wheeled counterparts. You’ve heard it all before, but some things are just worth repeating:

### Don’t forget TCLOCS

| TIRES & WHEELS | Check the air pressure, check for roundness, cracks, dents, broken or missing spokes. |
| CONTROLS | Review the levers and pedals to make sure they’re still lubricated, adjusted, and fitted properly. Inspect cables to make sure they are not frayed, kinked, or foiled into sharp angles. Test that the throttle moves freely, does not stick, and maps closed when released. |
| LIGHTS | Check the battery terminals to ensure they are clean and tight, properly charged and secured. Look over the lenses for cracks, and secure mount. |
| OIL / FLUIDS | Check the levels and quality of the engine oil, shaft drive, hydraulic fluid, coolant, and fuel. Also check for leaks. |
| CHASSIS | Check the frame condition; ensure front forks and rear shocks are properly adjusted; check belt or chain tension ( lubricate the chain if needed and inspect the teeth of the sprockets). Replace broken or missing fasteners. |
| STANDS | Both center and side stands should be checked for cracks, bends and make sure they spring into place and have the required tension to hold the bike in position. |

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**Helmets:** The most important piece of equipment. Safety helmets save lives by reducing the extent of head injuries in the event of a crash.

**Eye Protection:** Since many motorcycles don’t have windshields, riders must protect their eyes against insects, dirt, rocks or other airborne matter. Even the wind can cause eyes to tear and blur vision. Good vision is imperative when riding.

**Gloves:** Durable full-fingered are recommended. They should be non-slip to permit a firm grip on the controls.

**Footwear:** Proper footwear affords protection for the feet, ankles, and lower parts of the legs. Leather boots are best.

**Clothing:**

- **Overalls:** Should have long sleeves. Trousers (not shorts) should have long sleeves. Trousers (not shorts) should be baggy or flared at the bottom to prevent entanglement with the chain, kick-starter, foot pegs, or other protrusions on the sides of a motorcycle.
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**Let’s get Ready to Ride ...**

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KNOW SAFETY ... NO PAIN

I am the enemy and I'm more powerful than the combined armies of the world. I have destroyed more men than all the wars of all nations. I massacre thousands of people every year. I am more deadly than bullets and I have wrecked more homes than the mightiest of guns.

In the U.S. alone, I steal more than 500 million dollars every year. I spare no one and I find my victims among rich and poor alike, the young and old, and the strong and weak.

Widows know me to their everlasting sorrow.

I loom up in such proportions that I cast my shadow over every field of labor. I lurk in unseen places and do most of my work silently. You are warned against me, yet you heed me not. I am relentless, merciless, and cruel. I am everywhere — in the home, on the streets, in the factory, at railroad crossings, on land, in the air, and on the sea. I bring sickness, degradation and death; yet few seek me out to destroy me. I crush; I maim; I will give you nothing and rob you of all you have.

I am your worst enemy – I AM CARELESSNESS!

NO SAFETY ... NO PAIN

Author Unknown

A BODYBUILDER’S DREAM COME TRUE

Tech. Sgt. David, Creech AFB, Nev.

There he was, standing on the 2015 National Physique Committee National Bodybuilding Championships stage, in Miami. “And taking first place, your new (IFBB) International Federation of Bodybuilders and Fitness) pro card holder, David,” the announcer bellowed into the microphone. “That moment meant everything to me … the feeling was indescribable. It’s something I had been chasing for so long and it’s unexplainable … it’s been a life-long dream.” Your dream may not be to become a bodybuilder or the president; maybe it’s just getting your degree, but you have to have a dream, because when you finally achieve it, it will be a feeling that you will never forget.” David, a 432nd Maintenance Group contract officer representative often says, “How do you want to be remembered when you leave this earth? Create your legacy … leave your legacy.” Don’t forget: a good workout starts with Check 3 GPS.

SENSOR OPERATOR BY DAY ... RACE CAR DRIVER BY NIGHT


By day, he sits in a cushy, thick-seat in a ground control station flying another 8-hour sortie in the remotely piloted aircraft … the MQ-9 Reaper. By night, he sits in a thin, lightweight racing seat, harnessed into a raw, stripped-out track monster. “There is nothing else that can bother you when you’re on the track and have the throttle pinned. When the day for his first competition arrived, Gabriel was ready to attack the track. He exceeded his goal, claiming a podium spot in his first-ever competition, leaving him satisfied, yet eager for his next taste of competition. Until then, Gabriel will continue to fly the MQ-9 in support of global operations while working on his car when he can … balancing himself to be a stronger leader, Airman, and driver. Be sure to “Check 3” first … on and off the tracks!