

Spring 2020

# Combat Edge

*Air Combat Command's Safety Magazine*



## PROTECTING AIRMEN

while protecting the nation

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# WHAT TYPE OF MATERIALS CAN I USE FOR CLOTH FACE COVERINGS?

Cloth face coverings can be made from household items or made at home from common materials at low cost. As an interim measure, you are encouraged to fashion face covering from common materials such as clean t-shirt or cloth that will cover the mouth and nose.



No specific colors or materials mandated by Air Force policy.



**DO NOT** use old uniforms/flight suits. as they may have insect repellent or flame retardant in the fabric.

FACE COVERINGS SHOULD BE CONSERVATIVE, PROFESSIONAL AND IN KEEPING WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT.

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COVER PHOTO BY MAJ. BRIAN WAGNER

# ACCent

## Reaching out: Take time to take a PULSE



Gen. Mike Holmes  
Commander

Teammates,

As we continue to adapt during these challenging times, I want to take a minute to let you know how proud I am not only of the ways you're finding to keep our Air Force combat-ready, but also of the ways you're taking care of each other.

I know things aren't normal right now, but we're working together to find a new normal. As we do this, you may find yourself more isolated than before because of the physical distancing and restricted movement. I want you to know that we're aware of these challenges. The chaplain corps is working hard to reach every Airman. We're also providing information and resources on ACC's new webpage, The Bridge, to help Airmen and families stay connected and inspired. Commanders are also working hard to reach out and check on Airmen, but I'm also asking you to continue to look out for each other.

Throughout the past several months, I've seen a lot of you reach out and intervene to help your teammates through hard times, and I want you to know how much I appreciate your efforts.

As we think about how to intervene, I'm convinced it starts with a sense of community and a sense of connection between us as teammates, which starts with the culture built at the squadron level. Again, I'm proud of our commanders and Airmen for the work that they've done to build that foundation.

When you find yourself reaching out, you may wonder how to approach the individual or start that conversation. One of our great Airmen, Master Sgt. Daryl Knee, came up with an approach called PULSE, as in, taking the pulse of a fellow Airman.

"P" stands for pause. When you're out in the community and connected into your teammates, take a moment to just visit. We ask you to do a lot, and I know we keep you busy, but take a moment to pause and check on each other.

"U" is for understand. All of us start from different places – and not all of us have the same well of resiliency to draw from. As things happen in your life, you reach into that well, and it's possible that some people just run out or that their store gets low. So please try not to judge others, but instead try to understand where they're coming from.

"L" is for listen. When you reach out, look them in the eye, and give them a chance to tell you what's on their mind. One of my jokes is that I say I'm comfortable with periods of awkward silence – sometimes when I'm doing an all-call, I have to be quiet for a minute, wait for people to start talking and then listen.

"S" is for share. If you're trying to break the ice, ask questions until you can find some common ground. Whether it's a favorite sports team or a hobby, find something to share and start a conversation.

And finally, the "E" is for empathize. See if you can put yourself in their position and truly care. Use your mind, but use your heart too.

Pause, Understand, Listen, Share and Empathize – PULSE is a checklist I'm going to try, and I encourage you to try it as well.

Please know we're proud of you. We know you're working hard, and we're thankful that you and your loved ones are a part of the ACC family.



# PROTECTING AIRMEN

while protecting the nation

How do you stand  
“shoulder to shoulder”  
in a time of COVID-19?

BY LT. GEN. DOROTHY HOGG

**F**or the United States Air and Space Forces, and indeed the entire United States military, this is no small question. It is so pressing, in fact, that the Air Force’s medical staff, in collaboration with experts nationwide, have been working nearly around the clock to answer it.

It’s not hard to understand why. The critical responsibilities and missions of our 685,000 total

force active-duty, Guard and Reserve Airmen do not fade even during a pandemic. Across a worldwide enterprise, our Airmen must remain healthy so they can maintain full readiness and the capability to protect our nation’s security and interests.

Achieving those goals often demands Airmen work literally “shoulder to shoulder” in tight spaces over long hours. You can find it with crews aboard our aircraft, maintenance personnel

on the ground, analysts at remote radar stations, recruits at training centers, and of course, at every Air Force barracks. Even within the sprawling Pentagon, thousands of active duty and civilian staff work in tightly bunched cubicles.

With the coronavirus’s arrival, those arrangements must be modified to ensure not only the health and safety of all personnel, but to ensure the Air Force’s unblinking ability to complete all missions.

Air Force medics and health personnel around the globe are resolutely following and ensuring compliance with guidelines issued by the Department of Defense and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It's why leaders at each of our bases are working closely with local public health officials to actively monitor the health of Airmen and their families, as well as to monitor those who have been stricken by COVID-19. By now, most Americans know that safety demands maintaining a social distance beyond which the virus can spread. It means being alert to symptoms including low-grade fever, respiratory distress and body aches.

To slow the spread of the coronavirus, DOD has enacted travel restrictions, including the halt of domestic travel for service members. The goal is to "flatten the disease curve" by slowing the spread of the virus and preventing medical systems from being overwhelmed.

Within the Air Force, our medics are executing all available measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in accordance with CDC and force health protection guidelines, and remain aligned with state and local public health organizations.

It demands ingenuity and flexibility. In Europe and Asia, where the outbreak has been severe, we have adjusted health procedures to account for the threat and continue to safely fly fighter and bomber missions to deter aggression. And across the globe, our airlift forces have continued their missions apace, refueling U.S. aircraft and delivering vital cargo. It is in the best tradition of our service, echoing the work of those who flew during the Berlin Airlift and other global crises.

We are reminding – and reminding again – commanders and senior noncommissioned officers about best practices such as avoiding contact with those

who are sick, washing your hands for at least 20 seconds, and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Our Airmen have always displayed such agility, adaptability and resiliency.

Although it is easy to forget the military's long history in the fight against infectious diseases, that history informs our actions and decisions today. The Office of Malaria Control in War Areas was established in 1942 and charged with protecting soldiers from malaria and other vector-borne diseases, such as typhus. It is the direct forerunner of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

It's worth remembering, especially now, that military physicians and researchers played important roles in developing vaccines against smallpox, yellow fever, influenza and typhoid.

We do not yet know how COVID-19 will evolve, how many Americans will be infected or die. What we do know is that the Air Force will take the actions necessary to protect our Airmen while also protecting the nation.

*On the following pages, you can see some of the many ways Airmen across the command are protecting their fellow Airmen, families and the nation.*

Photo by Airman 1st Class Azaria E. Foster



Photo by Nicholas J. De La Pena



Photo by Senior Airman Erick Requadt



Photo by Nicholas J. De La Pena



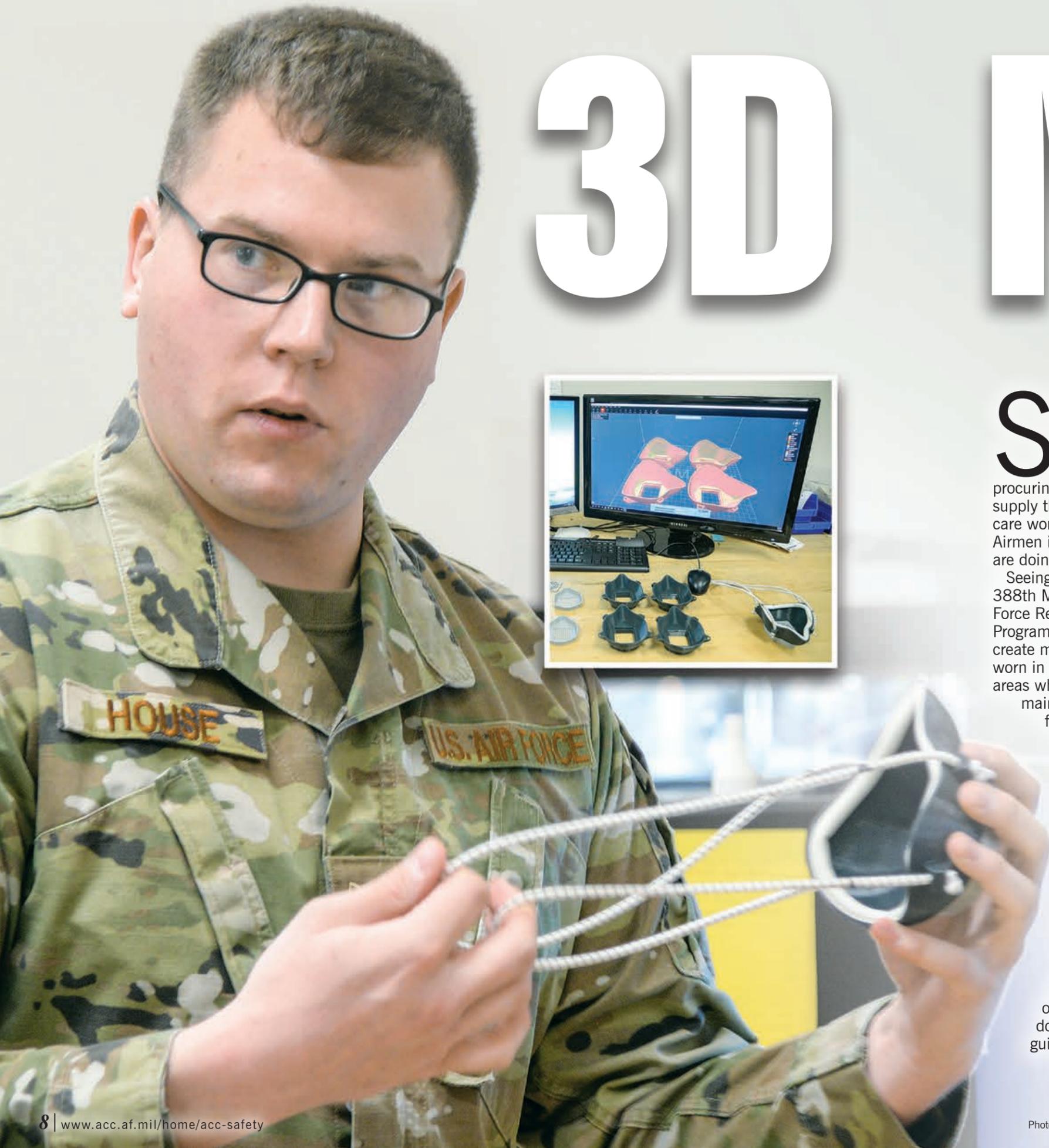
Photo by Airman 1st Class Taryn Butler



Photo by Airman 1st Class Luis A. Ruiz-Yazquez

# 3D Masks

BY MICAH GARBARINO



Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, protective face masks have been in demand worldwide. Instead of procuring them from a dwindling supply that's needed for health care workers and first responders, Airmen in the 388th Fighter Wing are doing their best to contribute.

Seeing the need, Airmen in the 388th Maintenance Group's Air Force Repair and Enhancement Program are using 3D printing to create more masks that can be worn in mission-essential work areas where it may be difficult to maintain the recommended 6 feet of social distance.

"Our Airmen have continued to impress me with their resourcefulness and ingenuity in developing innovative new ways to overcome obstacles and preserve our mission capabilities," said Col. Michael Miles, 388th Maintenance Group commander.

"We're all focused on getting the mission done while following the guidelines of Air Combat

Command and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention."

3D printing, also known as additive manufacturing, uses a machine fed with a spool of material – nylon, plastic and carbon fiber – that puts down hundreds of tiny layers of the material to create an object. Airmen load the design into a computer program that controls the machine, and they monitor the job as it progresses.

The AFREP program's primary responsibility is receiving and fixing broken parts and returning them to the supply chain. Normally they use the 3D printer to create prototype tools and simple plastic parts like wiring harnesses, grommets, fasteners, housing boxes and cable splitters.

At the beginning of April, they started experimenting with different mask designs, but are now ready to ramp-up their production. With the new Air Force and Department of Defense guidance on mandatory mask wear when social distancing isn't possible, the effort is hitting its stride at the right time.

"Right now, it takes about 45 hours to create four masks, so we're running 24-hour operations," said Senior Airman Brett House.

The masks are printed with a plastic material that can be repeatedly sanitized with alcohol. Each mask is made of three separately printed pieces – the main body, an internal grid and an external cap that holds a filter.

Airmen have had to get creative with the rest of the assembly. The filters are individually cut to specifications from home air filters. The straps that secure the masks to the face are cut from elastic cords. Weather stripping is cut and formed around the interior edge of each mask to create a seal.

Other units in the maintenance group already have orders in for dozens of masks. While AFREP will crank them out as quickly as they can, the wing is looking at other alternatives for providing masks.

"These N-95 masks we're printing meet CDC criteria," Miles said. "We're also looking at sewing less complex fabric masks and purchasing from the open market, but we're really excited about the capability to supply our own."

The masks will be distributed with guidance on how to wear and clean them properly.

# COVID-19 HEROES

BY AIRMAN 1ST CLASS BRYAN GUTHRIE



**T**he 57th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron started producing face shields March 30 to help the 99th Medical Group combat COVID-19.

Tech. Sgt. Matthew J. Bobbitt is using four simple objects: a 3D printer, transparency film, rubber bands and clips, costing roughly \$4 to print each face shield for healthcare workers on base.

“Our ability to overcome an adversary, such as COVID-19, is just like any other adversary,” said Bobbitt, a 57th AMXS resource advisor. “We have to adapt and overcome together to win.”

Bobbitt and his team came up with the idea while brainstorming ways to help fight COVID-19.

“The question came up of what we [in the Maintenance Group] can do to be able to help, so I began researching and found that face shields are the most

effective personal protective equipment that can be currently produced,” said Bobbitt.

According to the National Institutes of Health, face shields guard the entire face from infectious airborne particles, substantially reducing the possibility of contamination.

Bobbitt found a plan for face shields on the NIH website, which allows anyone to download the software to produce the face shields.

He is manufacturing the face shields using a 3D printer, which is typically used to build items for aircraft maintenance, such as training aids or small parts.

One batch of three face shields can be produced every three hours with little supervision.

“The process to produce the face shields is very simple,” said Bobbitt. “We 3D-print the shield’s headband, attach clear plastic transparency to the headband and then attach the strap

that holds the face shield to the wearer’s head.”

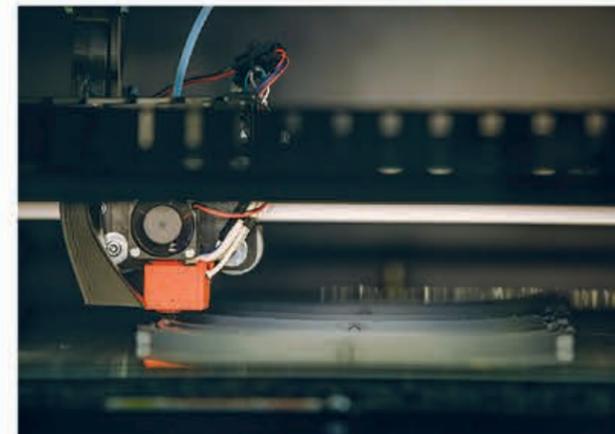
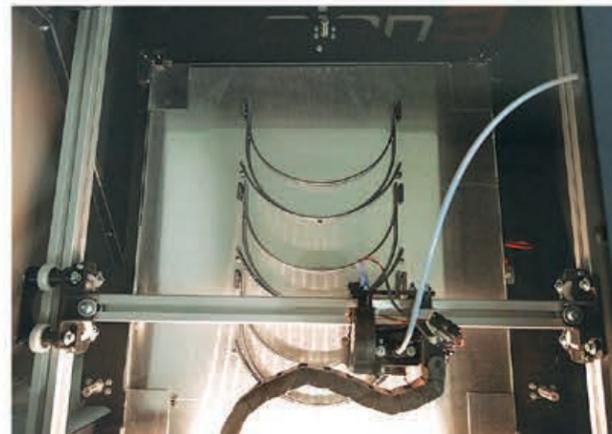
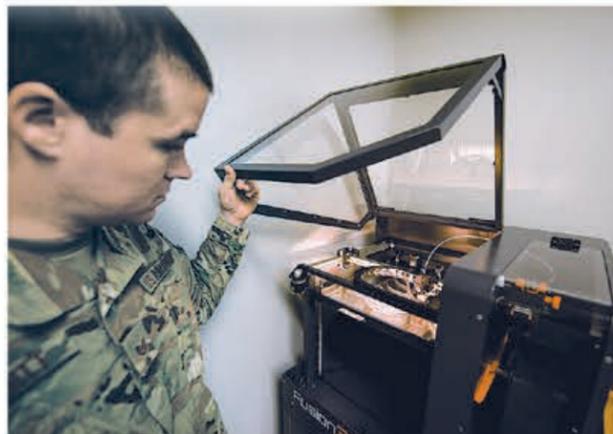
So far, Bobbitt and his team have produced more than 45 3D-printed face shield headbands and are aiming to create 400 total.

“Teamwork is very important during times like these because it allows us to share capabilities between various units to support each other to accomplish the mission,” said Bobbitt. “The 99th Medical Group supports us

to keep aircraft flying, so it is our turn to support them when they need it most.”

For instructions on how to print 3D face shields, visit the NIH’s website at <https://3dprint.nih.gov/discover/3dpx-013359>.

*Editor’s Note: This is one article in a five-part series featured on Nellis Air Force Base’s website that highlights how heroes are sustaining operations during the pandemic.*





# WRESTLING

## the Dragon Lady

BY MAJ. ERIC PRECHTL

**O**n Aug. 20, 2019, while flying toward a combat zone, I had a serious malfunction in a missionized U-2 aircraft that forced an emergency return. With the assistance of the supervisor of flying and the mobile chase car, I was able to safely limp home. The mistakes I made developed into lessons learned that I hope will help any aviator faced with a critical emergency.



with military control and advised the U-2 supervisor of flying of my emergency. The SOF and I went through training together, and it was reassuring to know another U-2 driver was there to help any way he could to get me back to Earth safely.

As I descended through 45,000 feet, the aircraft started vibrating severely. I checked to make sure the throttle was still in idle, then tried to determine the source. The vibes came on slowly, lasted a few minutes, then ended suddenly. When I first had indications of the failed AMAD, I did not suspect problems with the motor; however, following the vibrations I became worried the AMAD may have failed due to something mechanical upstream of the system. The AMAD is connected to the engine accessory gearbox via the power takeoff shaft. After landing, I learned that the vibrations were caused by the PTO shaft disintegrating at its designed failure point and shrapnel was impinging against a shielding intended to protect the engine casing. Regardless, in the moment, I wasn't sure what happened, and I subsequently

made every effort to conserve flying energy as much as possible in case the engine flamed out or seized and I needed to glide back.

Shortly after starting the descent, I decided to dump my fuel. This would reduce aircraft weight by about 13,000 pounds and allow for an easier landing and shorter ground roll. Although the U-2 can land at max gross weight, above a certain threshold weight the allowable descent rate at touchdown reduces. I didn't want to worry about greasing it on, and I didn't know how much the additional weight would affect deceleration with emergency braking. Consequently, dumping seemed like the best option. However, I did not consider how difficult it would be to determine when I was finished dumping. Under normal circumstances, the AVP gives an indication when you are "dump complete" – normally 20 minutes for mission fuel loads – and after visually verifying that fuel has stopped leaving the dump masts, you could then calculate an approach speed. Verifying "dump complete" is important because otherwise there is no good way to estimate

how much fuel you have mid-dump. The U-2 only counts down the fuel that flows to the engine, and not how much fuel leaves the dump masts or actually remains in the tank. Without the AVP, you don't get a fancy "dump complete" message. Moreover, having shed my environmental control system to conserve battery life, the glass of my canopy was starting to freeze, restricting my vision to directly in front of the aircraft. Finally, after chipping away as much ice as possible with my glove, I was able to visually confirm dumping complete about 10 minutes prior to setting up for final approach – 40 minutes after starting the fuel dump process.

I gravity-extended the landing gear at altitude to give some additional drag for the descent; however, I would only be able to verify both wheels down and locked by "unshedding" my non-essential DC bus. It took several minutes for the tailwheel to fall. I got anxious as the minutes passed in this battery-consuming electrical state and eventually G'd-up the jet a little to get the tailwheel to lock.

Start, taxi, takeoff and departure were all uneventful as I pointed the jet northeast for another eight-plus hour U-2 mission. While ascending through 54,000 feet, I was completing my final climb checks and sensor checks, when all three of my Multi-Function Displays blanked. I referenced my Standby Flight Display (SFD) and cross-checked my airspeed and pitch to ensure I was still at the appropriate mach and attitude for the climb. I initially thought my Avionics Processor, or AVP, had failed – I've had an AVP failure in flight before, so I knew that I just need to turn the AVP switch off and back on again – no big deal. However, the Christmas tree

of lights on my Warning, Caution Annunciator panel illuminated with several warnings, and I realized I had a bigger problem.

In addition to several associated faults on the WCA panel, "AMAD" jumped out as the root cause to the blackout. The Airframe Mounted Accessory Drive, or AMAD, supplies power to the primary and backup electrical generators and the hydraulic pump. Without the AMAD, the U-2 has about 45 minutes of battery life, limited hydraulically powered drag devices to expedite descent and no ability to restart the jet in the event of a flameout. It took a while to get past the denial and mentally accept that

the AMAD had failed. This system is incredibly robust and failures are extremely rare – especially without any clues leading up to the failure, i.e. errors such as low AMAD oil pressure or high AMAD temperature.

Step one of the AMAD failure checklist is to hit the "shed" switch. This action immediately removes several non-essential items from the now battery-powered DC bus and should extend battery life to just over 80 minutes. I noted the time on my iPad and then turned the jet direct to base and pulled back the throttle to idle to start the long, drag-unaided descent. I declared an in-flight emergency



To conserve additional battery power, we can shed all aircraft systems with the exception of especially critical functions. In this condition, we lose our radios, transponder and non-emergency heating of the windshield. Because I wasn't certain how much voltage I had remaining on my batteries and because I wanted to land before I lost all power, I chose to shed these systems for about 10-15 minutes to save as much juice as possible. Prior to shedding my radios, I told host-nation air traffic control that I would be "comm out" for a bit while continuing my descent on present heading. Probably due to degraded transmission power from the radios, compounded with language barriers with foreign air traffic control, it took several radio calls to get my intent across.

Understanding my situation and anticipating that I would potentially be without communication with air traffic control, the SOF anticipated my actions and called over to the U.S. tower liaison and explained why I may be unable to communicate and what I was probably doing. When I powered the radios back on, ATC was very accommodating and understood that I would limit my transmissions. Great heads-up play from the SOF!

We fly all missions with an iPad and backup our navigation with Foreflight and a GPS receiver. This combination is not electrically tethered to our aircraft, and it was a game-changer for this emergency. Navigation was a no-brainer, and I was able to easily maneuver myself to a 3-mile final before

visually acquiring the runway through the desert haze.

The U-2 normally lands with flaps extended, speed brakes out and spoilers deployed at touchdown to allow for a very manageable, out-of-idle, 3-degree approach glidepath. With no hydraulic pressure, the flaps and speed brakes will not extend. Without these drag devices, the approach path needs to be closer to 1.25 to 2 degrees, with the throttle uncomfortably close to idle, while flying at near-stall speed in order to prevent the aircraft from accelerating while descending to the runway. To compensate for the Dragon Lady's extreme efficiency, the U-2 is designed with emergency spoilers that can still function with

loss of hydraulic pressure and allow for a slightly more normal glidepath. This provides the necessary drag to settle the jet through ground-effect while also substantially reducing ground roll after touchdown. I could have deployed the spoilers during descent, but opted not to in order to minimize the chance of overheating the emergency spoiler system pump. I didn't want to risk these spoilers not working for short final through rollout. The system worked as advertised!

The operations supervisor and the mobile chase car driver did outstanding work greasing the skids with radar, tower and emergency response and filling in the blanks of what I was doing and explaining why they lost radar and radio contact while I was trying to conserve battery life. My mobile backed

me up on emergency checklists and both parties perfectly balanced speaking up for certain considerations while keeping the communications clear so I could wrestle the jet.

No malfunction is easy while flying single-seat, single-ship single-engine, but as with any emergency procedure, you rely on your experience, knowledge and a little bit of luck. Prioritize tasks, compartmentalize your stress and leverage your available resources - trust in your training and know your jet. Emergencies will never come at opportune times, checklists will rarely handle all circumstances and aircraft design is far from perfect. However, have faith in the understanding that we stand on the shoulders of giants who have developed and continually refine emergency procedures. I was lucky enough

to have had this event in Day VMC conditions, with an outstanding secondary source of navigation, well within glide and radio range of home plate, and with a legit crew. Fortunately, we were able to end the day with three beers and slightly thicker mustaches. ✈️

*Maj. Eric Prechtl is currently serving as a U-2 pilot with the 99th Reconnaissance Squadron at Beale Air Force Base, California. For his actions during the event described above, he won ACC Safety's Pilot Safety Award for the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2019, the 2019 ACC Airmanship Award and the Air Force Safety Well Done Award.*

Comments or questions on this article? Email us at [thecombatedge@us.af.mil](mailto:thecombatedge@us.af.mil)



# DIG DEEPER

## The Class B Mishap That Shouldn't Have Been

BY SENIOR MASTER SGT. JAKOB KURTZ

I remember the phone call ... on the other end of the line, the supervisor was telling me one of his Airmen caught his thumb in a hardened aircraft shelter door.

"Automatic ... ?" I asked.

"No; it's a small, manual personnel door ... like a house door, but steel and concrete – and really heavy," he said.

That was the beginning of a conversation where I thought the Airman would be down for a few weeks and be back to work. As it turns out, the Airman never made it back to work, and he was transferred to a medical center to undergo a series of operations. His thumb was all but severed, and he was in danger of losing it permanently.

It was early December when the mishap occurred, and we were in exercise mode. At the time,

the injured Airman was trying to get inside and shut the hardened aircraft shelter door during an alarm condition. Buttoning up a facility during a potential chemical attack is extremely important and needs to be done expediently. However, while he was shutting the door he inadvertently placed his opposite hand on the hinge part of the doorjamb for leverage with his thumb wrapped around the lip. He closed the door. To say he was in a hurry was an understatement. Being in a hurry is part of the job when you are under attack – exercise or real-world event. But as we investigated the mishap, something disturbing became apparent: This was not the first time this had happened.

In fact, we discovered no less than eight separate mishaps since 1999 – all on the same doors – at the same base. There were

additional mishaps from other bases on the same style doors. While the safety investigation board assembled and started their investigation, I shifted my focus to wrapping up duties from the exercise. But I was curious ... why were there so many injuries on these doors, and why weren't we successful in preventing them in the past?

I dug into the data to find an answer. What I found, unfortunately, did not surprise me. All the injured Airmen in the past were found to be rushed, distracted, complacent or not paying attention and then subsequently retrained on procedures to open and close the door. Every mishap, in essence, was treated as a new mishap. And training was the go-to method for prevention. It didn't work. And for two decades, the mishaps kept repeating.



Why?

The answer is simple, but also complex. In simple terms, our prevention efforts were aimed at the wrong things. That is, we were trying to prevent behavior – the very behavior we were encouraging. In one instance, we were telling our Airmen to be quick, fast and expedient during exercises and alarm conditions. But the instant a mishap occurred, we were citing them for being in a hurry or some other human error condition. It is true that the Airmen were in a hurry and distracted. Unfortunately, our investigations stopped there and didn't consider the complexity of the situation. Worse, the mishap investigations never addressed how to permanently prevent the mishaps from reoccurring. How

could they when the focus was always on the behavior?

The complexity of the problem of why we weren't successful in preventing these mishaps lies in the thoroughness of the investigations and comes down to this: In safety, we have an issue with stopping the investigation at the person-level of human error, which usually leads only to superficial and short-term fixes. Short term because the fix, which is usually training, only lasts as long as the memory of the mishap. We didn't know it at the time, but we were setting new Airmen up for failure. We were actually treating them as the hazard while ignoring the actual hazard: the door. With an engineering fix, these mishaps

could've been prevented nearly two decades ago. However, each mishap report stated the Airmen were not paying attention or in a hurry and the fix was more training on the door.

These mishaps show what a short-term memory we have. We "fix" the simple things, forget the mishap, and when it reoccurs, we forget it ever happened before. This is why historical analysis is so important! The cycle then repeats. This Class B should never have happened. But it did – because the actual hazard was never addressed, and Airmen were lining up in assembly-line fashion waiting for their turn to be injured. A look at another mishap shows this same problem.

In 2016, at a northern Air Force base, an employee was injured outside of her office during the winter season. She worked as an administrative assistant and was delivering interoffice mail to an adjacent building. While she was in between buildings, she slipped on ice covering the sidewalk and hit her head. The investigatory cause was inattention; she was not paying close attention to her surroundings. The report also mentioned she would be briefed on the importance of being aware at all times, especially during icy conditions. While I'm unable to confirm whether this briefing actually happened, it wouldn't have made a difference if it did. Much like the other mishap, this one focused on what the injured individual should have done better, but it makes no mention of the responsibility of the employer to remove or mitigate the hazard. Instead, it sends an inadvertent message to the employer and employees that individuals who get injured are the sole problem and training is the only way to address these "types of people." Despite this investigation, Airmen were not any safer. Controls were not put in place to remove or mitigate the hazard. This seems like a minor mishap to take issue with, but unabated hazards can lead to serious mishaps. Even this one could have led to a death ... after all, she hit her head on concrete. What should we be learning from these mishap and others like them?

How we investigate matters! The previous mishaps share common troubling factors in that they have unaddressed hazards and they are repeat mishaps. Unfortunately, instead of addressing physical hazards, it's common in our reports to assign person-level human factors like inattention, distraction, etc., as causes and not investigate any further. We should instead be looking at the full spectrum of human factors: person,

environment, supervisor and organization. We have to consider all the possibilities and use all levels of human factors as a guide to direct where we look. If we stop at the person-level, we may only ever be able to address behavior causes and end up only treating symptoms. Besides, fixing individual behaviors is a whack-a-mole approach that never ends because new Airmen are constantly entering the service.

We also need to stop treating the Airmen as the problem. I know we don't do it intentionally, but we do it, nonetheless. It is also quite prevalent in private industry as well. I've seen it happen to Airmen more times than I can count. Something breaks or goes wrong, and the Airman is standing in front of the commander, receiving paperwork. Not following the technical order? Paperwork. But not following the tech order isn't an Airmen problem; it's a culture problem. And how they were trained is just as important to investigate as anything else.

What we recommend and control matters more. One of the most significant challenges a safety professional will face is making a recommendation and then following that recommendation to closure. It's a fight. And sometimes it takes years. The best recommendations are those that eliminate or mitigate hazards, and the best method to use is the hierarchy of controls approach of elimination, substitution, engineering, administration and personal protective equipment. It just makes sense – if hazards are eliminated, exposures and chances for injury and damage are also eliminated. As I said before, this is an exceptionally tough and oftentimes lengthy process. But it can – and should – be done. We owe commanders and leaders thorough assessments of hazardous conditions. In the hardened-aircraft shelter door

mishap, we put such a recommendation forward. An engineering fix that will eliminate future injures. It's still open. But that's OK. There is progress toward completion, and I follow up on it even though I'm not in that chain of command anymore. I have a vested interest.

As a whole, it's tough for safety offices to be tied to recommendations. We like to be free from open-ended purgatory and close things out as soon as they're opened. But we have to resist the temptation to do that. If we fall into that trap, safety will become no more than a superficial career field where nothing truly gets fixed. We have to stay focused on eliminating and mitigating hazards and following recommendations through to closure.



Don't get me wrong, we can't fix everything. And while the methods above work well for on-duty occupational mishaps, most of us struggle against the off-duty and sports and recreational mishaps. For those types of mishaps, continual education may be the best we have. There are times when it's OK to state "accepted risk." That being said, we still need to be thorough in our investigation and analysis to ensure we don't miss underlying hazards.

Ultimately, to be of any value, safety professionals must understand the intricate details of Air Force operations and missions. It's the best way to know about hazards before a mishap occurs. Understand their jobs, understand their hazards. To do this, we need to engage with Airmen and observe operations. In today's modern world of technology, this is still the best way to uncover hazards, identify near-misses and find deficiencies. All this aimed at protecting the mission. 🗡️

*Senior Master Sgt. Jakob Kurtz currently serves as the superintendent of the 480th Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Wing Safety Office at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia. Most recently, he earned the title of 2019 Safety Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year not only at the command level, but also at the Air Force level. For a complete list of Air Force Safety award winners, see page 24.*



**BY MASTER SGT. CHAD GRADY**

Exercises are an inherent part of training in the Air Force. Exercises that involve training rounds, such as blank ammunition and Close Combat Mission Capability Kit dye-marking cartridges are important to properly train and ensure readiness. However, utilizing any type of ammunition is inherently dangerous.

Training rounds are used in field exercises, force-on-force training or by military working dog teams. People who participating in these exercises are not “armed;” however, there are certain safety criteria that must be met prior to use. Multiple mishaps have occurred where Air Force personnel were injured by CCMCK rounds ... and all were 100% avoidable.

Commanders are required to develop and implement written guidelines for small-arms and light-weapons training. These guidelines must meet minimum requirements of regulations. Weapons safety managers, commonly referred to as WSMs, are responsible for investigating small-arms mishaps and must understand unit training to ensure these guidelines support

the unit weapons safety program. WSMs must be proactive and visit units to ensure all facets of safety are covered. This involvement is key to the success and safety of all personnel handling these training rounds. Many times, we see this lack of knowledge during mishap investigations, which by that time, is too late in the game.

*Publications To Consider*

- Air Force Manual 91-201 Explosives Safety Standards
- Air Force Instruction 36-2654 Combat Arms Program
- Air Force Manual 31-129 USAF Small Arms and Light Weapons Handling Procedures
- Technical Order 11W2-9-4-11 Technical Manual Operator’s Manual for Close Combat Mission Capability Kit



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Amber Williams



# AND THE AWARD GOES TO ...

BY AIR FORCE SAFETY CENTER PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**A**ir Force Chief of Safety Maj. Gen. John T. Rauch Jr. recently announced the recipients of the Secretary of the Air Force, Chief of Staff Safety Awards, and the Chief of Safety Awards for 2019.

“The Air Force is steadfast in its efforts to maintain safe operations across the service, nevertheless the accomplishments of these Airmen and units certainly stood out in 2019,” Rauch said. “Effective risk management and mishap prevention are key components of the Air Force Safety Program, but the real impact comes when leadership and Airmen at all levels commit to integrating safety into the daily plans, operations and training throughout the force.”

Air Force safety awards recognize outstanding safety acts, achievements and sustained performance of individuals, teams and units for their efforts in mishap prevention.

**Secretary of the Air Force  
Safety Award**  
Air Mobility Command (AMC)

**Major General Benjamin D. Foulois  
Memorial Award**  
Air Mobility Command (AMC)

**Colonel Will L. Tubbs  
Memorial Award for Ground Safety**  
United States Air Forces in Europe and  
Air Forces Africa (USAFE/AFAFRICA)

**Koren Kolligian Jr. Trophy**  
Capt. Justin W. Sager, 33rd Flying Training  
Squadron, Vance Air Force Base, Oklahoma (AETC)

**Chief of Staff of the Air Force  
Aircrew of Distinction Award**  
Crew of Blade 11, 582d Helicopter Group,  
Francis E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming (AFGSC)

**Air Force Chief of Safety  
Special Achievement Award**  
Tyndall Air Force Base Support Agency Team,  
Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida (ACC)

**Safety Civilian Professional of the Year Award**  
Alex Vega, 30th Space Wing,  
Vandenberg Air Force Base, California (AFSPC)

**Safety Senior Non-Commissioned Officer  
of the Year Award**  
Senior Master Sgt. Jakob Q. Kurtz, 480th ISR Wing,  
Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia (ACC)

**Safety Non-Commissioned Officer  
of the Year Award**  
Tech. Sgt. Charles A. Ladnier, 45th Space Wing,  
Patrick Air Force Base, Florida (AFSPC)

**Safety Officer of the Year Award**  
Maj. Daniel L. T. Garrison, 582d Helicopter Group,  
Francis E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming (AFGSC)

**Air Force Chief of Safety  
Aviation Maintenance Safety Award**  
52nd Maintenance Squadron Propulsion Flight,  
Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany  
(USAFE/AFAFRICA)

**Air Force Chief of Safety  
Outstanding Achievement Award  
for Occupational Safety Category I**  
21st Space Wing,  
Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado (AFSPC)

**Air Force Chief of Safety  
Outstanding Achievement Award  
for Occupational Safety Category II**  
31st Fighter Wing,  
Aviano Air Base, Italy (USAFE/AFAFRICA)

**Air Force Chief of Safety  
Outstanding Achievement Award  
for Occupational Safety Category III**  
39th Air Base Wing,  
Incirlik Air Base, Turkey (USAFE/AFAFRICA)

**Air Force Chief of Safety  
Outstanding Achievement Award  
for Occupational Safety Category IV**  
728th Air Mobility Squadron,  
Incirlik Air Base, Turkey (AMC)

**Air Force Chief of Safety  
Outstanding Achievement Award  
for Occupational Safety Category V**  
Air Force Research Lab Detachment 8,  
Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico (AFMC)

**Air Force Chief of Safety  
Outstanding Achievement Award  
for Weapons Safety**  
Master Sgt. Victoria L. Yale, 379th Air Base Wing,  
Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar (USAFCENT)

**Air Force Nuclear Surety  
Outstanding Achievement Award**  
90th Missile Wing,  
Francis E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming (AFGSC)

**Air Force Chief of Safety Space Safety Award**  
30th Space Wing,  
Vandenberg Air Force Base, California (AFSPC)

**Aero Club Safety Certificates**  
Robins Aero Club,  
Robins Air Force Base, Georgia (AFMC)  
Eglin Aero Club, Eglin Air Force Base, Florida (AFMC)

# 1st Quarter FY20 Awards



## Crew Chief Safety

Senior Airman Jason Geran and  
Airman 1st Class Peyton Gosso  
389th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron  
U.S. Air Forces Central Command



## Flight Line Safety

Staff Sgt. Jacob R. Armstrong  
Senior Airman Caleb J. Crook  
757th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron  
Nellis AFB, Nevada



## Flight Safety

Tech. Sgt. Dennis Wichter  
556th Test and Evaluation Squadron  
Creech AFB, Nevada



## Unit Safety Representative

Tech. Sgt. Michelle A. Taylor  
4th Munitions Squadron  
Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina



## Safety Career Professional

Tech. Sgt. Kristie L. Kersch  
505th Command and Control Wing  
Safety Office, Hurlburt Field, Florida



## Pilot Safety

1st Lt. Charles Walet  
333 Fighter Squadron  
Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina



## Explosives Safety

332nd Expeditionary  
Maintenance Squadron  
U.S. Air Forces Central Command



## Aircrew Safety

Capt. Tyler Jennings and  
Capt. James Egelston  
335th Fighter Squadron  
Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina



## Unit Safety

332nd Expeditionary Maintenance  
Squadron Munitions Flight  
U.S. Air Forces Central Command



## Weapons Safety

Master Sgt. David B. Levine  
57th Wing Weapons Safety Division,  
Nellis AFB, Nevada

## Mishap Statistics Scoreboard

### FY20 Flight

As of 31 Mar 2020

	Fatal	Aircraft Destroyed	Class A Aircraft Damage
1 AF			
9 AF			✈ ✈
12 AF			
25 AF			
USAFWC			
ANG (ACC-gained)			
AFRC (ACC-gained)			
AFCENT (ACC-gained)	✈		

### FY20 Occupational

As of 31 Mar 2020

	Class A Fatal	Class A Non-Fatal	Class B
AFCENT		0	0
USAFWC		0	0
9 AF	👤	0	0
12 AF	👤	0	0
16 AF	👤	0	0

### FY20 Weapons

As of 31 Mar 2020

	Class A	Class B
ACC	0	0

#### 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)

\* Fatality \*\* Non-rate producing \*\*\* Performing SOUTHCOM mission

## Flight Notes

Unfortunately, ACC experienced three Class A aviation mishaps for the second quarter of fiscal year 2020; one aircraft was destroyed, and two had significant damage. Those three mishaps bring our aviation Class A count for FY20 to a total of three.

## Occupational Notes

The second quarter of FY20 yielded two fatal mishaps involving privately owned vehicles. The first occurred when an Airman on a motorcycle was cut off by an SUV performing an illegal U-turn on a divided highway. The ensuing collision resulted in the fatality of the Airman.

Operating a motorcycle is extremely dangerous; vigilance is key. There's no margin for error, and riders are operating at a higher risk level ... even when they're doing everything right. Drivers must also be vigilant with motorcyclists, who can be easily missed if complacency creeps in.

The second mishap involved an Airman who was driving home at night when, for reasons unknown, he pulled to a stop, parked and turned off his vehicle in an active lane on the interstate. The individual was fatally injured when another motorist ran into his parked car at a high rate of speed.

In the event of a vehicle breakdown on the highway, the National Safety Council recommends motorists navigate their vehicle out of traffic, off of the highway and onto a shoulder. The NSC also recommends turning on hazard flashers and placing reflective triangles behind the vehicle to alert drivers.

## Weapons Notes

ACC experienced five reportable weapons mishaps during the second quarter of FY20. Three of the mishaps involved exceeding drop criteria and two were the result of improper handling. Not surprisingly, these mishaps were caused by complacency in handling and following proper tech order compliance. Let's take a step back, slow down and refocus our mission on safety. Complacency endangers you and everyone around you. Please continue your proactive approach to explosive safety to help identify risks and hazards early so we can eliminate wasted time and resources.

#### Symbols for Mishap Aircraft



**OVER** the  
**Edge**  
**MAGAZINE**



**SPRING  
MOTORCYCLE  
FOCUS**

**PAGE 6**



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Christopher Gross

# OVER the Edge MAGAZINE

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by Lisa Gonzales  
AFSEC/PA, Kirtland AFB, NM

## 10 | WALK THIS WAY

Information provided by  
the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

## 4 | TELEWORKING TIPS

Information provided by the Federal  
Emergency Management Agency

## 12 | WASH YOUR !@# \$ HANDS!

by Master Sgt. Chad Grady  
ACC/SEW, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, VA



# COVID-19 CORONA VIRUS DISEASE 2019

March 2020 // Talking Points Special Edition  
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## ABOUT COVID-19

On Jan. 30, 2020, the World Health Organization declared a public health emergency of international concern for the 2019 novel coronavirus, or COVID-19. On Jan. 31, 2020, the secretary of Health and Human Services declared a public health emergency in the United States and announced new measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The current epidemic, which originated in mainland China, has demonstrated the capacity of COVID-19 to spread globally. While supporting other government agencies' response to the COVID-19 threat, the Department of the Air Force is responding appropriately to protect the health of the force and maintain operational readiness.

## COVID-19 QUICK FACTS

On 3/11/20 WHO publicly characterized COVID-19 as a pandemic.

It is not yet known if weather and temperature impact the spread of COVID-19.

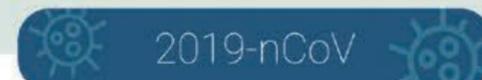
COVID-19 is not the same as the coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

Older adults and people who have serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes and lung disease are at a higher risk.

## HEALTH PROTECTION MEASURES

Situation	HPCON	Example Health Protection Measures
Normal Baseline	0	Routine: Standard precautions such as routine hand washing, cough on sleeve, diet, exercise, vaccinations, education, stockpiling, planning, routine health alerts, etc.
Report of unusual health risk or disease	A	Limited: Health Alert, communicate risk and symptoms, review plans, verify preparation: training, stocks, posture, prepare to diagnose, isolate and report new cases.
Outbreak or heightened exposure risk	B	Moderate: Strict hygiene (no handshaking, wipe common use items); if exposed, self-isolate (wear mask or remain home); avoid contaminated water/food or risk area, vector control.
High morbidity epidemic or contamination	C	Substantial: Social distance (both meetings, social, TDY); shelter in place (schools, etc. if directed); don respirators; mass distribution of medical countermeasures, if applicable.
High mortality epidemic or containment	D	Severe: Restrict movement (quarantine), mass evacuation, mass decontamination, subsist on secure food/water sources.

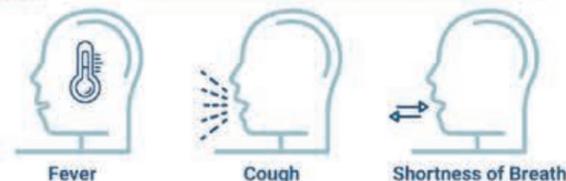
## NOVEL CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK



### SYMPTOMS\* OF THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS

Patients with 2019-nCoV have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of:

\*Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure.



**IF YOU'VE TRAVELED TO A HIGH-RISK COUNTRY OR A COUNTRY WITH A LEVEL-3 TRAVEL HEALTH NOTICE WITHIN THE PAST 2 WEEKS AND DEVELOP SYMPTOMS, CALL YOUR DOCTOR.**

## COVID-19 RESOURCES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>  
Department of Defense: <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/Spotlight/Coronavirus/>  
Department of the Air Force: <https://www.af.mil/News/Coronavirus-Disease-2019/>

## COVID-19 PREVENTION



Currently there is NO vaccine to prevent COVID-19.



The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.



Everyone has a role to play in getting ready and staying healthy, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for more tools to aid in prevention preparation.

## STANDARD PRECAUTIONS



Clean your hands often with soap and water and/or hand sanitizer.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.



Avoid close contact, putting distance between yourself and other people.



Stay home if you're sick, except to get medical care.



Cover coughs and sneezes.



Wear a face mask if you are sick.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.



**W**ith the recent efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19, many agencies – both military and civilian – have seen a large increase in telework. Below are some tips, provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to help people stay safe during their time at the home office.

The foremost health and safety concerns with a home office are ergonomic working conditions. Teleworkers should have desks and chairs that facilitate good posture and reduce repetitive muscle strain. Working from home has a few other challenges, including plentiful access to snacks and fewer distractions to break up tasks like reading and typing.

To combat these challenges and enhance health and safety while teleworking, consider these six tips:

1. Fidgeting is actually beneficial. No offense, but Mom was wrong on this one. Mayo Clinic researchers in 2005 concluded the more you move – even tapping your feet under a desk – the less likely it is that you will gain weight. Small movements have major lifestyle impacts.
2. Take frequent breaks. Stand up and stretch to keep blood moving to all your limbs. One colleague at FEMA receives frequent reminders

about conference calls. He takes those reminders as an opportunity to do push-ups or squats beside his desk.

3. Combat the pantry with healthy snacks. At a certain time, we all feel hungry when working from home. Prepare healthy snacks of fruits and vegetables ahead of time and avoid the chips.
4. Stand for your calls. When participating on conference calls or taking phone calls, pace around the house. This is

a tactic to stimulate the body and mind and is frequently suggested as a good practice when participating in a job interview by telephone.

5. Trade your commute time for exercise. When teleworking, use the time saved from commuting to exercise. Whether it's a brisk walk around the neighborhood, a run or going to the gym, a little exercise has physical and psychological benefits during the workday.

6. Keep cords under control. Computer cords and telephone chargers can become a tangled mess and cause trip hazards. Avoid this risk by ensuring there is no path between your workstation and your outlet.

Do you have a teleworking safety story to share or a lesson you learned while working from home? Email us at [thecombatedge@us.af.mil](mailto:thecombatedge@us.af.mil)



# SPRING MOTORCYCLE FOCUS

BY LISA GONZALES

**T**he Air Force kicked off its second annual Spring PMV-2 Focus March 21 in an effort to contact 100% of all military motorcycle riders, validate training requirements are being met and ensure riders scheduled and attended overdue training.

In fiscal year 2019, the Air Force witnessed a significant reduction in motorcycle fatalities resulting in a 57.5% decrease compared to the recent five-year average. There were four fatalities in FY19.

“I want to thank everyone involved for focusing on the Air Force motorcycle safety program,” said Michael Ballard, Air Force chief of occupational safety. “This includes motorcycle instructors, riders, safety staff, commanders and supervisors.”

Ballard mentioned that last year, the Air Force had the fewest number of rider fatalities that were found on record.

“That amazing feat was only possible due to the efforts of all these people and a bit of luck,” Ballard said. “Why luck, you ask? Because oftentimes, we suffer motorcycle rider deaths through no fault of the rider. They are simply in the wrong place at the wrong time when another driver was responsible for the accident.”

Riding a motorcycle is an inherently dangerous activity that requires continuous awareness and training to mitigate possible hazards on the road. This was a driving factor that led to the Air Force implementation of training based on a lifelong learning approach for its more than 23,000 motorcycle riders some years back.

In 2013, Air Force motorcycle training went from a one-time requirement to a multifaceted five-year plan intended to build a rider’s skill level. The training breaks down into three parts that focus on providing the right training, at the right time, on the right bike.

“The Air Force has lost 47 Airmen to motorcycle accidents over the past five years,” said Arthur Albert, Air Force motorcycle program manager. “Of those, the 19- to 25-year-old group tops the list with 25 fatalities. We’re taking this time to ensure all of our riders are aware of the hazards of riding, and they’re getting the tools to mitigate those hazards by providing the right training for their skill level.”

Initial training (Level I) takes an Airman from zero motorcycle knowledge to being able to balance and ride safely in traffic. This course should be taken within 30 days of request and Airmen must have a motorcycle permit or license to attend. However, initial training is not required if Airmen already have a motorcycle license or endorsement.

Intermediate training (Level II) helps the rider polish up their basic skills and helps with personal risk assessment. Exercises done on the motorcycle range enhance basic operating skills, crash-avoidance skills and puts an emphasis on improving braking and cornering. It is provided within 60 days of request, but never more than one year after completing initial training or being identified as a licensed rider.

Every five years a sustainment training, also called a refresher course, must be taken.

“Safely riding a motorcycle doesn’t mean not riding. It encompasses a safe behavioral mindset and being physically prepared for the challenges riding a motorcycle brings,” Albert said. “We want Airmen to keep their training current, practice safe riding skill sets, ensure they are mentally prepared to mitigate inherent risks, and always wear all required personal protective equipment on every ride, no matter how short or long the ride might be.”

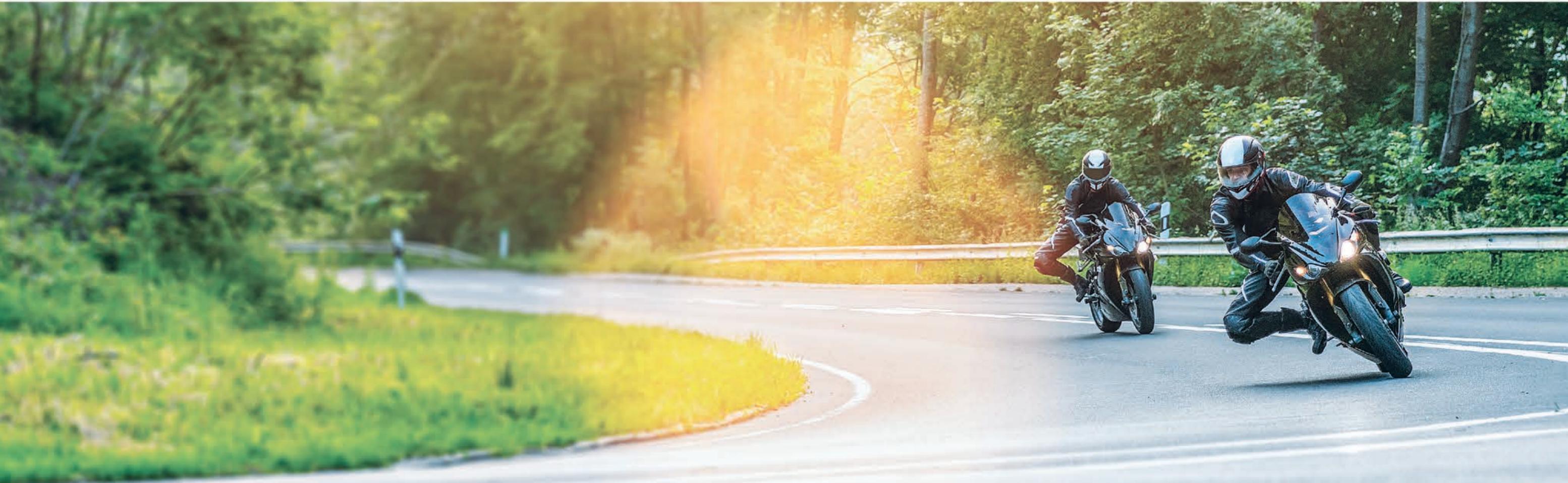
Air Force major commands are responsible for implementing the requirements and validating that their installation commanders provide the prescribed traffic safety training to their personnel.

Unit commanders, within each major command, appoint motorcycle safety representatives, in an additional duty capacity, to monitor the program. These representatives are vital to the program’s success because they validate riders’ records for their unit in the Motorcycle Unit Safety Tracking Tool database and assist riders with scheduling and attending training.

The Motorcycle Unit Safety Tracking Tool provides training data for Air Force motorcycle riders and fills the requirements for monitoring both rider demographics and training outlined in Air Force Instruction 91-207, U.S. Air Force Traffic Safety Program. The data collected is then analyzed to help the Air Force make informed decisions for future training, tracking tools, and guidance needed to keep Airmen safe while riding a motorcycle, making sure they receive the right training, at the right time, with the right bike.

“Unfortunately, FY20 has already yielded six deaths of Airmen in motorcycle accidents,” Ballard said. “During this focus, we can all continue to make a difference in protecting our riders. We need everyone to ensure they are doing their part within the program to help prevent more needless deaths, now and into the future.”

For more information on the Spring PMV-2 Focus visit the Air Force Safety Center’s website at: <https://www.safety.af.mil/Divisions/Occupational-Safety-Division/Air-Force-Rider/Spring-PMV-2-Focus/>



# Protecting the Pedestrian

FROM THE NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

**W**hile many people and entire families throughout the country are staying home to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, walking is one of the most easily accessible – and free – forms of exercise available to all ages. Walking can also be a great way to reduce stress while enjoying the outdoors; however, there are still risks involved. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, there was a more than 3% increase in the number of pedestrians killed in traffic crashes in 2018, totaling 6,283 deaths – the most deaths since 1990. The tips below, provided by the NHTSA, will help both pedestrians – and drivers – prevent additional unnecessary accidents.

Everyone has different preferences when it comes to transportation, but at one time or another everyone is a pedestrian.

Whether you're a concerned resident, a parent or a caregiver, you want to do everything you can to make sure you, your loved ones and your neighbors can enjoy walking safely in your community. The resources below will help you do just that. We offer pedestrians of all ages guidance on maintaining safety while enjoying the benefits of walking.

## 10 Walking Safety Tips

1. Be predictable. Follow the rules of the road and obey signs and signals.
2. Walk on sidewalks whenever available.
3. If there is no sidewalk, walk facing traffic and as far from traffic as possible.
4. Keep alert at all times; don't be distracted by electronic devices that take your eyes (and ears) off the road.
5. Whenever possible, cross streets at crosswalks where drivers expect pedestrians. Look for cars in all directions, including those turning left or right.
6. If a crosswalk or intersection is not available, locate a well-lit area with the best view of traffic. Wait for a gap in traffic that allows enough time to cross safely; continue watching for traffic as you cross.

7. Never assume a driver sees you. Make eye contact with drivers as they approach to make sure you are seen.
8. Be visible at all times. Wear bright clothing during the day, and wear reflective materials or use a flashlight at night.
9. Watch for cars entering or exiting driveways, or backing up in parking lots.
10. Avoid alcohol and drugs when walking; they impair your abilities and judgment.

## 9 Driving Safety Tips

1. Look out for pedestrians everywhere, at all times. Safety is a shared responsibility.
2. Use extra caution when driving in hard-to-see conditions.
3. Slow down and be prepared to stop when turning or otherwise entering a crosswalk.
4. Yield to pedestrians in crosswalks and stop well back from the crosswalk to give other vehicles an opportunity to see the crossing pedestrians so they can stop too.
5. Never pass vehicles stopped at a crosswalk. There may be people crossing that you can't see.
6. Never drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
7. Follow the speed limit, especially around people on the street.
8. Follow slower speed limits in school zones and in neighborhoods with children.
9. Be extra cautious when backing up—pedestrians can move into your path.

Do you have a story or a personal lesson learned about pedestrian safety? Email us at [thecombatedge@us.af.mil](mailto:thecombatedge@us.af.mil) ✉



WALK THIS WAY



### BY MASTER SGT. CHAD GRADY

In these days of trying times, we've placed an intense amount of emphasis on cleanliness and sanitization. We're wearing face masks, washing our hands every 30 seconds, and can't get within 6 feet of a stranger. How did we get here? Could some of this have been prevented?

The answer may be yes. It has taken a pandemic to make us realize that we need to check ourselves and maintain a certain level of cleanliness and hygiene. Currently, we're at a place in time where shaking a stranger's hand, bro hugs and even a pat on the back for a job well done are in jeopardy. We can no longer maintain the same lifestyle that we cherished for so long.

Will things ever go back to normal? Who knows. The future is impossible to determine at this point, but one thing is certain: Life will be very different.

Is there a need to walk around in a hazmat suit and keep 1,000 feet of space between yourself and society? No; however, there are some everyday habits that you can continue to practice while COVID-19 is present and after it passes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is

strongly recommending some heightened forms of sanitization during these difficult times. Remember to wash your hands often and thoroughly. Soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds. Although 20 seconds of silence might seem like an eternity, you can mix it up a bit and sing a song while you wash your hands. Break out some Beyoncé, Bon Jovi or even some B-52s and rock out while you're doing it. Who knows, everyone else may join in. You could be the next big YouTube star! If you have stage fright, just rock out in your head for 20 seconds to make sure you do it right. Some other tips that the CDC has recommended include avoiding close contact, covering your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover, and cleaning and disinfecting surfaces that others may come into contact with. The CDC has also provided guidance on covering your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing. That one trips me up a bit. It's 2020; do we really need to be educated on covering our mouth and nose when we cough or sneeze? Wasn't that taught to all of us as kids? Apparently it wasn't if we're being directed to practice a commonsense habit by an organization that was constructed to protect America.

What can we do to improve as we move forward? The answer is simple: Don't stop practicing these

same hygiene techniques. When you have contact with anything unsanitary, wash your hands, grab that gallon jug of hand sanitizer and bathe in it. Poor hygiene practices most likely contributed to the spread of this nasty pandemic that we now know as COVID-19. Take into consideration all those things that directly or indirectly come in contact with other people. We can't control the actions of others, but we can control our own. Think outside the box and take into consideration just what you may be handling and how many others handled or touched it before you.

Think about all the filthy things that we touch and handle on a daily basis. Cell phones, keyboards, touch screens, ATMs, shopping carts, light switches and doorknobs. Every time we put our paws on these objects, we are subject to whatever the person before us may have generously deposited their germs on. Let that sink in for a second. How many times have you seen someone do something that is less than sanitary – or even gross? Now imagine that person borrows your phone to make a call. Do you sanitize the handset? Chances are, you do not. Do we need to cross over into germaphobe mode? Not necessarily, but we can be proactive in our approach toward cleanliness and sanitation and be

the stewards to help prevent a future outbreak of a similar disease in the future.

When the dust settles and we go back to some form of normalcy, what can we expect? Will we ever be able to go back to the movie theater, the pub, a concert or comedy show? No one can predict that at this point, but it's important to stay cognizant of your surroundings at all times and maintain a high level of cleanliness. Keep this pandemic in mind the next time you go to the driving range or to the bowling alley. Maybe it's just not that weird to carry around some hand sanitizer to prevent the spread of disease. Acknowledge and act on those little signs at the gym that mandate you wipe down the equipment after use. No one wants to get sick, and we owe it to our fellow human beings to act in a universally preventive manner.

As we move forward, we will all learn from this, and hopefully we'll learn to appreciate the luxuries that we have so long taken for granted. And maybe this reinforced some good habits along the way -- a crisis shouldn't be the reason to take those extra seconds to wash your hands. Let's not fall back into those same poor habits that might have helped get us here in the first place. Continue to stay safe and practice good hygiene! 🦋