

Spring 2025

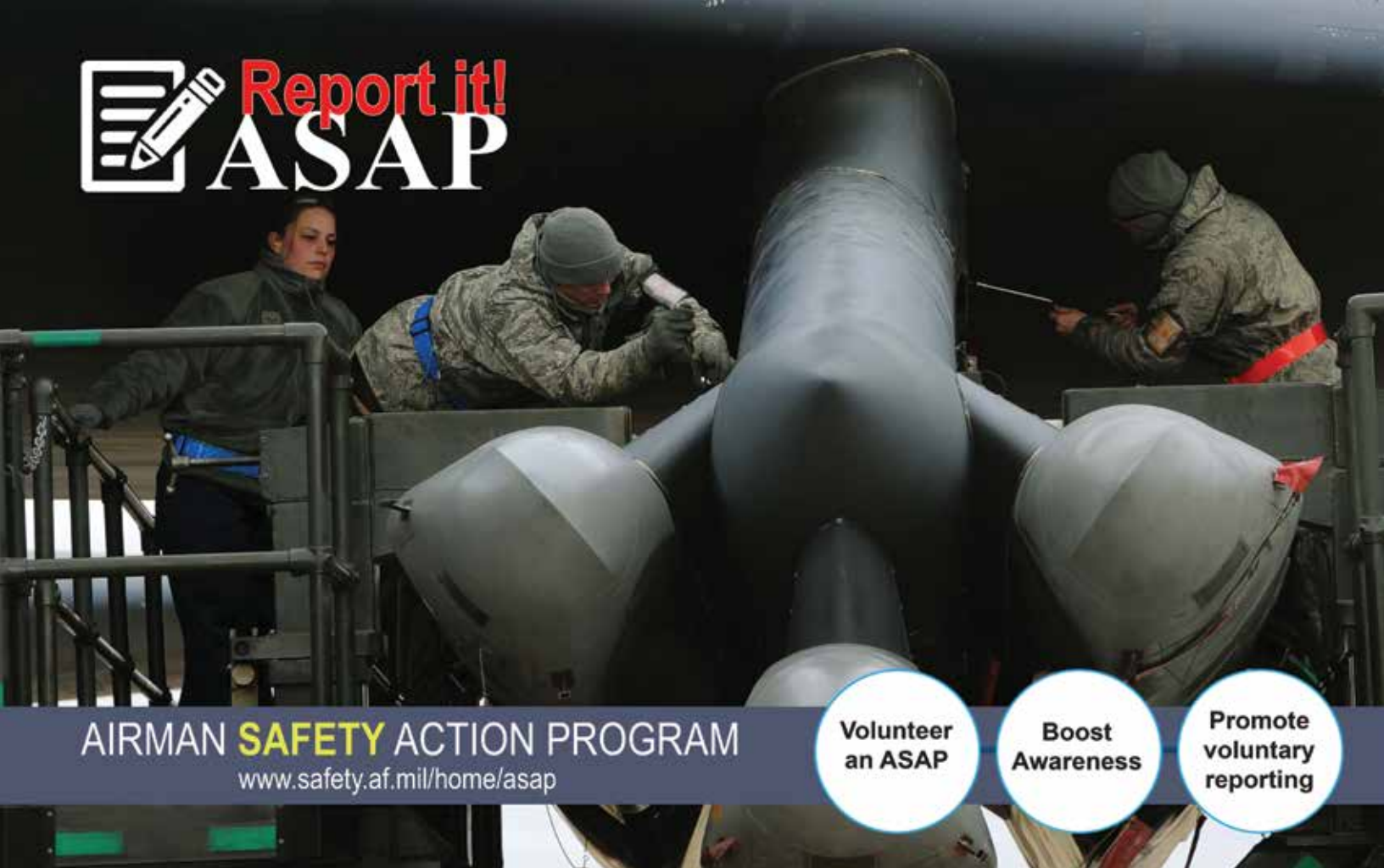
# Combat Edge

*Air Combat Command's Safety Magazine*

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Volume 33 Issue 1 ACC SP 91-1

THE COMBAT EDGE (ISSN 1063-8970) IS PUBLISHED QUARTERLY, BY AIR COMBAT COMMAND, HQ ACC/SEM, 220 SWEENEY BLVD (BLDG 669, RM 203), JOINT BASE LANGLEY-EUSTIS, VA 23665-2714. PERIODICAL POSTAGE PAID AT HAMPTON, VA 23670 AND ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO HQ ACC/SEM, 220 SWEENEY BLVD, BLDG 669, RM 203, JOINT BASE LANGLEY-EUSTIS, VA 23665-2714.

DISTRIBUTION: F. OPR: HQ ACC/SEM. DISTRIBUTION IS BASED ON A RATIO OF ONE COPY PER 10 PERSONS ASSIGNED. AIR FORCE UNITS SHOULD CONTACT THE COMBAT EDGE STAFF TO ESTABLISH OR CHANGE REQUIREMENTS.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS: AVAILABLE TO NON-DOD READERS FOR \$51.00 (\$71.40 OUTSIDE THE U.S.) FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS, PO BOX 371954, PITTSBURGH PA 15250-7954. ALL SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE CORRESPONDENCE SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE SUPERINTENDENT, NOT HQ ACC/SEM.

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COVER PHOTO BY SRA TREVOR GORDNIER

# ACCent



Spring is in the air, and among many things that means the start of baseball season. Nearly every year I find myself amazed at how long the Major League Baseball season is, and I question how it is they perform at such a high level for such a long period of time. The first thing that comes to mind is the classic saying, “How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.” Similarly, that metaphor can be used to conceptualize how we can prevent mishaps within Air Combat Command. Much like a team making its way through the MLB season, the men and women of ACC face a variety of challenges while maintaining combat readiness.



Col Jesse Doyle  
Director of Safety

Through a combination of discipline and risk management performed in small, manageable pieces, it is possible to “eat an elephant” even in the most extreme circumstances.

Every Airman at every level has the ability to make a positive impact and enable a safe environment both on and off duty through some relatively simple concepts. First, and most importantly, take no unnecessary risk. Understand your limitations both personally and professionally in order to make informed decisions. Never pass up the opportunity to learn from your own or others’ mistakes. Speak up when you don’t understand a task or are incapable of completing it. Finally, understand and appreciate the acceptable level of risk within your given situation. An MLB player doesn’t have to take the unnecessary risk of swinging at every pitch to lead their team to a World Series championship, and an Airman doesn’t have to take unnecessary risk in order for every mission to be a success. We need each and every one of you to accomplish our mission, but more importantly, we owe it to each other and our friends and families to keep each other safe while doing that.

# BRU-HOO

By MSgt Sterling D. Taylor

During the peak of the fight against ISIS in 2016, my unit was deployed to Al Dahfra AB, UAE, to assist in stopping the terror organization from conducting further operations. I was deployed with F-22s from the 90th Fighter Squadron out of Elmendorf AFB, Alaska, and we were paired with an F-15 Squadron from Seymour Johnson AFB in North Carolina. My assigned section during that trip was Precision Guided Munitions, located in the bomb dump where we maintained the fleet of air-to-air munitions and the Air to Ground Small Diameter Bomb (GBU-39). The GBU-39, also referred to as the (SDB) is a 250-pound guided bomb that is loaded onto a Bomb Rack Unit (BRU), each BRU holds 4 SDB's. Between the two fighter squadrons, over 700 SDB's were expended during our 6-month deployment. As expected, we had a few minor incidents while performing SDB operations. Damage to either the BRU or SDB was more common at the beginning, but the number of incidents was greatly reduced as lessons were learned through experience.

One night, we were tasked to load several BRUs with SDBs, and I was driving the MHU-83 jammer (munitions transporter/loader) that night. Although I was very competent and efficient on the jammer, it was not my usual role; however, the usual driver had the night off, and it fell to me. The conditions in UAE in the middle of summer were hard on everything from personnel to equipment, and the jammers we used every day were no exception. On that particular night, the winds were higher than normal, but not enough to inhibit explosive operations, and we dealt with it and pressed forward.



***“Not all answers are found in the book. Knowing what to do and thinking quickly in emergency situations is critical for the safety of our force.”***

As we had done hundreds of times before, we fragged the BRU with a full load of SDBs, and I lifted the load with the jammer up to waist height, to allow the other Airmen to finish securing the SDBs to the BRU. It so happened that I was facing the wind at this moment. Suddenly, a hydraulic line on the jammer failed, and quickly began spraying fluid into the air, which blew right back in my face. In an instant, I was showered by hydraulic fluid, and within 20 seconds there were several gallons of fluid on the ground—all while high explosives were suspended in the air.

There were only a few seconds during which I had to compose myself and react to the situation. My first option was to try and lower the BRU to its

cradle. The jammer was still responding to inputs for the hydraulic system, but I didn't know how long that would last.

My other option was to shut down the jammer, but I didn't know what would happen if I did. Would the boom remain in the elevated position with the munitions suspended, or would the loss of hydraulic pressure allow it to fall? The munitions were not in their transportation cradle, which would have protected them from striking on the ground. If I shut down the jammer, the munitions would have been left in an unsafe condition—not from exploding, but from being damaged if they fell. Without the cradle, all four of the GBU-39s were vulnerable.

I decided to lower the BRU onto its cradle.

Luckily, even with the hydraulic system purging fluid, it performed as intended. I had no way of knowing how long it would continue working, but I was grateful it hung on for that short time. As it turned out, I was still in the spot where I had picked up the munitions, and the lowering portion was in position. This was fortunate because, as I lowered the load, the amount of hydraulic fluid spraying me in the face increased, making it very difficult to see. As soon as the load was on the ground, I turned off the jammer to reduce the risk of fire from the high temperatures of a running engine.

I ran inside to utilize the eyewash—what an unpleasant experience that was! Luckily, no one was hurt, and no further equipment or assets



A1C Vince Sharma poses next to the MHU-83 that experienced the hydraulic line failure (USAF Photo)

were damaged (aside from my uniform, the only casualty).

The big lesson learned from that situation was that you never know what will happen in any given situation. Therefore, it is important to have conversations about all the “what ifs.” In Ammo, we have our crew books that spell out emergency procedures, but I've seen them used only a handful of times during my 20 years of service. Not all answers are found in the book. Knowing what to do and thinking quickly in emergency situations is critical for the safety of our force.✈️

# Medical Lends a Hand

By MSgt Chelsey E. Lynch-Cay

While deployed as the medical team with the 55th Fighter Squadron in support of Operation Noble Eagle in December 2023, we were tasked to Puerto Rico. We had limited military treatment facility resources, but had access to local emergency rooms. During that time, one of our F-16 pilots presented with red, swollen, and extremely painful streaks running up his arm, originating from a hangnail. Recognizing the symptoms of acute lymphangitis, an inflammation of the lymphatic vessels due to infection, I knew the pilot needed antibiotics urgently to prevent the condition from worsening.

After consulting with my Flight Surgeon, we started the patient on Bactrim & Augmentin, two first-line antibiotics. Unfortunately, by the next day, the patient's condition had not improved, but instead was worsening. The medical team decided intravenous (IV) antibiotics were necessary; however, we lacked the required IV antibiotics and military medical facilities to ensure the patient was seen promptly. The Flight Surgeon accompanied the patient to a local emergency room, where they waited 24 hours as the patient's condition deteriorated. Realizing that the local ER was not going to see the pilot anytime soon, he initiated an aeromedical evacuation.

The plane ticket was booked, but the patient's pain was intensifying. With quick thinking, the Flight Surgeon decided to try another antibiotic therapy so the patient would not have to endure an extensive flight while in pain. He dropped the patient off at the airport, then rushed to a local pharmacy to pick-up the medication.

Upon arriving back at the airport to meet the patient, security denied him access to drop off the medication at the patient's gate. They told him "You can only get through security if you have your own boarding pass." To reach the patient, he purchased a \$60 one-way ticket to a nearby island, allowing him to pass through security and deliver the antibiotics just as the patient was boarding the flight. Although he never intended to board the flight himself, this plan enabled him to reach the patient in time.

Once landed, the pilot was taken immediately to a local emergency room, where pre-coordinated care arrangements ensured that medical professionals were ready and waiting. The team assessed the pilot's condition and administered the necessary treatment without delay. Thanks to the quick and organized response, the pilot received timely and effective medical attention. Over the following days, the pilot made a full recovery, praising the coordinated efforts and quick actions of the medical and support teams involved.

The incident demonstrates that even an issue as minor as a hangnail can develop into a significant aeromedical situation, one that can jeopardize the safety and operational readiness of both the individual and the mission. This highlights the necessity of taking every patient complaint seriously, regardless of how trivial it may appear at first glance. ✪



A U.S. Air Force F-16C Fighting Falcon prepares to depart the 156th Wing airfield during Operation Noble Eagle at Muñiz Air National Guard Base, Carolina, Puerto Rico. Photo by MSgt Rafael D. Rosa



# No Ordinary Day

By Mr. Brent W. Day

Anyone who has been on a deployment knows the importance of a good routine; however, it also pays to expect the unexpected, as you never know what can and will happen. In this story, I was on my fourth deployment, the first with the unit to which I was assigned.

We were deployed to Qatar, working 12-hour shifts, six days a week with one day of rest. Our duty hours were from noon to midnight and midnight to noon. This schedule helped share the heat stress level on us workers.

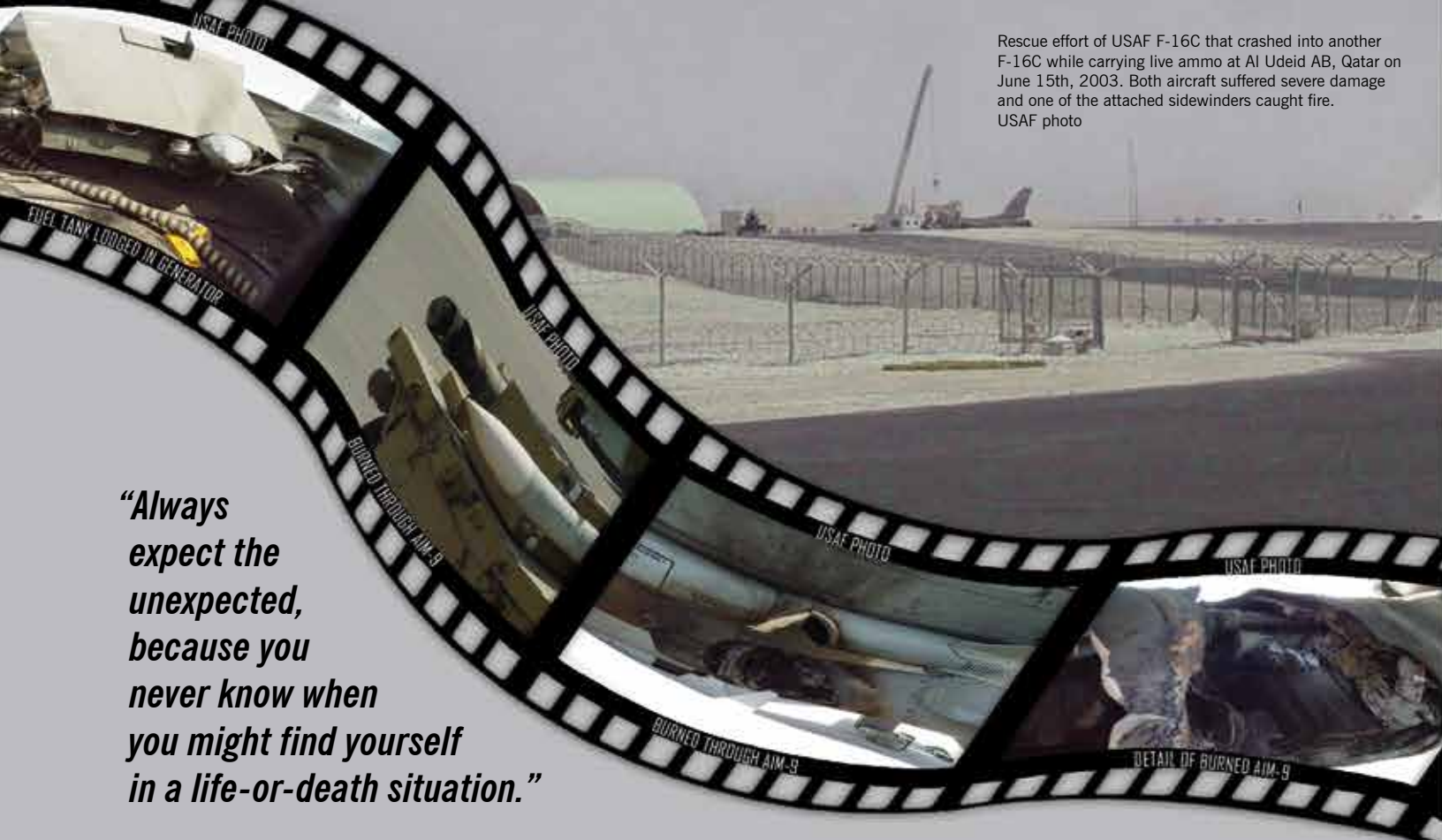
Flying operations were fairly straightforward and simple. Two loaded aircraft would

fly at all times in the Area of Responsibility, providing close air support for the Army and striking designated targets. All this seemed ordinary to me, and after about a month and a half, I felt like I had finally found my routine. As I was about to find out, the next few days were anything but ordinary—more like extraordinary.

*“As I was about to find out, the next few days were anything but ordinary—more like extraordinary.”*



Rescue effort of USAF F-16C that crashed into another F-16C while carrying live ammo at Al Udeid AB, Qatar on June 15th, 2003. Both aircraft suffered severe damage and one of the attached sidewinders caught fire. USAF photo



***“Always expect the unexpected, because you never know when you might find yourself in a life-or-death situation.”***

I was off duty when the incident happened, and only got the stories from my co-workers who were either part of the event or witnessed it.

On 15 June 2003, I got up and started my daily routine. I met the rest of my co-workers at our pickup point. I could see a large crane off in the distance, and it appeared to be over by our aircraft parking ramp. The other shift arrived to swap out, and the first thing my turnover said was “The jets are making out.” Confused by his comment, I asked what he was talking about. He replied: “You’ll see.” I soon saw exactly what he meant, and why the big crane was out there.

During a routine recovery, an aircraft was taxiing back to its parking location. Without warning, the pilot lost braking and steering. At the same time, a maintenance crew was doing some operational checks on another aircraft in the first parking spot. As the first aircraft came in to park with no brakes and taxiing in the wrong direction, a maintainer tried to slide a chock

underneath one of the tires in an attempt to slow it down. Unfortunately, his efforts did not have the desired effect. The aircraft rolled over the chock and was redirected straight toward the parked aircraft.

The maintenance crew working the parked aircraft had only seconds to get out of the way before the runaway jet collided with the one parked. One member was trying to exit the flight station when the collision occurred, and was thrown about 35 feet through the air. He got the nickname “NEO” from the way he flew through the air as if he were in the matrix. The collision reoriented the parked aircraft so its forward-firing munitions were pointed directly towards tent city. This was bad enough, but it was made worse when the collision also caused a fire that resulted in the missile firing on the rail.

One of the maintenance crew members was able to shut down all of the aircraft ground equipment and assist the pilot to safety. The other maintenance

crew member got the fire extinguisher and extinguished the fire. We initially thought he was trying to put out the missile on the rail, but he in fact was trying to cool the seeker head down so the missile did not detonate. No matter what, these two individuals went over and above the call, risking their lives in a terrible situation. Luckily, no one was injured. Both aircraft were severely damaged in the incident and would require depot-level repair.

The lesson I learned from this incident is simple, but important: No day is “ordinary.” No matter your routine, life can become unusual in the blink of an eye. Always expect the unexpected, because you never know when you might find yourself in a life-or-death situation. It was nothing short of a miracle that no one was seriously injured or killed in this incident. Some quick actions by a few heroic individuals definitely saved not only the individuals directly involved, but potentially those over in tent city. ✪

# What’s Your Story?

Wisdom comes with age. Share yours with us.

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

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

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

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

**You have something to say, and we’re listening.**



# Who in the A-10...?



One July day, several years ago, I was sent to a one-month exercise called “Red Flag,” located at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska. I had traveled around the world several times, but Alaska was different. There, the sun did not rise—nor did it set. I was accustomed to working 12-hour shifts during my first 6 months at Osan AB, South Korea, as a Weapons Load Crew Team Chief on the A-10C aircraft. The Alaskan environment was a challenge I never had encountered before. As with most obstacles I had encountered during my military career, I overcame the abnormal lifestyle, even fighting off Alaska’s state bird, the mosquito, every single day.

On the first day, my crew and I loaded 6 A-10Cs with 6 Bomb Dummy Units (BDU-33)s per aircraft that weighed 25 lbs each. All aircraft took off and all came back empty—a successful sortie. Each sortie enabled a pilot to gain critical training, while also allowing the maintainers and weapons loaders the experience to hone on their skills. Once the aircraft were down for the day, they were refueled, inspected for abnormalities, including operational and functional checks of the weapons system. They then were reloaded with the next days’ munitions. This was a regular day in the life of a weapons load crew.





The 23rd Civil Engineer Squadron Fire Department respond to a simulated dropped munition emergency call on the flightline during exercise Mosaic Tiger 24-1 at Moody Air Force Base, Georgia, Nov. 14, 2023. Emergency responders, such as the fire department and explosive ordnance disposal teams, are part of the response efforts to this scenario to ensure the safety of the aircrew and aircraft. Photo by Andrea Jenkins



A training BDU-33 rests under an A-10C Thunderbolt II aircraft  
Photo by Andrea Jenkins

The following day started just as any other: confusing. Was it morning or evening? After the confusion dissipated, we performed a weapons post-load upon arriving to work. This inspection is to be completed before the pilot climbs into the cockpit, to ensure the aircraft is ready for flight. Once the pilot accepted the aircraft, they performed their systems check in the cockpit. Once the check was

completed, the pilot was ready to taxi down to the end of runway, where the aircraft was inspected one last time by our crew by way of an Immediately Prior To Launch (IPL) checklist.

After completing the IPL procedures on the first 5 aircraft, the crew approached the last aircraft like they had the others. Unfortunately, this inspection did not go as planned. While I was inspecting the left side of the

aircraft, my 3-man was on the right, removing all applicable pins and/or safety gear for the bombs, as required by the checklist. It was at that time I heard an unusual thud, followed by a sudden vibration under my boot, things I had not experienced with the other aircraft. I investigated the abnormality, and saw the weapons crew looking at a BDU-33 on the ground, with the safety block still installed (The block

prevents the charges in the BDU from detonating).

Thanks to my many years of training, I knew exactly what to do in this situation. I read the checklist and performed the applicable steps. We contacted the Maintenance Operations Center about the dropped munition and initiated a ground emergency. We also alerted the fire department and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD). One of

the initial steps was to evacuate all personnel within 300 ft of the site. I recalled the Cardinal Rule of explosives safety: Expose the minimum number of people to the minimum number of explosives for the minimum amount of time. I read these specific steps out to the pilot and advised him to immediately inform the other 5 aircraft pilots to maintain the evacuation distance.

The results of the investigation indicated that the equipment holding the bomb had experienced an internal malfunction. Thanks to our training, we were able to safe the scene until the Fire Department and EOD arrived. By performing the required steps, the weapons load crew avoided an explosive mishap, thereby preventing aircraft damage, injury, or death.

A Laser Guided Small Diameter Bomb is released from an AC-130.  
Photo by SrA Jeff Parkinson



# Errant Thunder

By SSgt Jesus M. Pinon

Under the harsh glare of the afternoon sun, the weapons crew was summoned to the AC-130W, stationed for Sierra Nevada Corp. (SNC), to conduct routine checks on the weapons system. SNC was known for its civilian expertise in handling advanced weapons, including the formidable 105 howitzer gun systems. Their skill had made such checks routine; however, this seemingly ordinary day was about to take an unexpected turn.

As the team inspected the BRU-61 on the wings, ensuring the aircraft's systems correctly recognized the bombs, the silence was shattered by three loud booms. The sudden noise sent a wave of fear through the weapons troops on the ramp. Three Griffin Missiles (AGM-176) were lying on the ground, having

been inadvertently ejected from the aircraft. A ground emergency was declared, resulting in a swift response from emergency personnel.

Fortunately, the missiles were not armed. As the dust settled, the incident served as a stark reminder of the fragile line between routine checks and catastrophic outcomes. The near disaster was a tale of malfunctioning equipment and a lesson on the importance of vigilance, discipline, and adherence to safety protocols.

The investigation attributed the mishap to two critical lapses: the weapons team's negligence in fully disconnecting the munitions electrically—a foundational safety measure ingrained in military protocol; and a civilian's deviation from the established procedures during operational checks. These

oversights, seemingly minor in isolation, combined to create a scenario brimming with the potential for tragedy.

The incident illuminates the implications of complacency and the human propensity for error, and highlights the need for continuous improvement in safety practices. It also underscores the necessity for rigorous training, constant vigilance, and a culture that prioritizes the observance of procedures. In the shadow of what could have been a devastating loss of life, the event stands as a testament to the importance of taking every precautionary measure, no matter how routine it may seem. It is a reminder that the greatest defense against the unforeseen is often found in the meticulous attention to detail and the collective commitment to safety. ✦

# Always Bring Your Water

By MSgt Nico A. Deleon

The day began as any other, with thorough checks of tools, vehicles, gear, and personal protective equipment—standard for any munitions-related activity. A crew chief was overseeing the delivery and loading operation of a white phosphorous rocket onto an F-16 aircraft. The procedure required the inspections of protective suits, face shields, fire extinguishers, and radios.

Included with these standard safety items was an unusual necessity: a water bucket we were required to keep filled to a mark on its side. It was used for submerging the warhead in the event of an emergency in which the rocket became active. The bucket was checked often and refilled as needed because of evaporation. On this particular day, as the operation proceeded smoothly, this seemingly minor item—a full water bucket—proved critical.

During the unloading of the final rocket, a mishap occurred. Upon extraction from the aircraft pod, the warhead began smoking. At that moment, quick thinking and adherence to procedure were paramount. The munitions crew chief directed the loader to submerge the smoking warhead in the bucket. The equipment worked as designed: The depth of the water in the bucket, precisely maintained through regular refills during the day, matched the exact length

of the warhead, ensuring the smoking primer was extinguished effectively.

The lesson to be learned from this incident is clear: Adherence to safety procedures, including seemingly minor ones such as maintaining a filled water bucket, can prevent potentially catastrophic incidents. This event underscores the importance of thorough preparation, continuous vigilance, and strict adherence to

established protocols in handling explosives.

The daily routines of handling explosives demand an unwavering commitment to safety. No matter how routine or seemingly insignificant, each precaution safeguards against unforeseen dangers. By prioritizing adherence to procedures, we protect ourselves and our colleagues and uphold a standard of excellence in explosive safety. ✦



# Rising Stars of Safety 2024

By SSgt Lauren D. Douglas

On September 17, 2024, the National Safety Council awarded two Air Force Airmen the Rising Star of Safety Award at their annual National Awards Celebration in Orlando, Florida. This award recognizes safety professionals under 40 years of age for their safety leadership and dedication to continuous safety improvements.

The awards took place in conjunction with the 2024 NSC Safety Congress & Expo, the nation's largest gathering of safety and health professionals.

"National Safety Council award winners don't just aim to check off a box for safety," said Lorraine Martin, president and CEO of the National Safety Council. "These leaders understand that they must prioritize safety at every level of decision making."

The class of 2024 included 38 safety professionals for their continuous safety improvement within their organizations and created initiatives focused on measurable outcomes to provide workforces safe environments.

This year's Air Force Rising Star of Safety from Air Combat Command is Master Sgt. Nicole Palermo, Occupational Safety Manager.

As a safety manager, Master Sgt. Nicole Palermo advises Major Command leaders on force development, mishap prevention, and Department of Labor standards. She manages command-level mishap prevention programs and provides Risk Management guidance for Agile Combat Employment and Mission Ready Airmen within Air Combat Command. With 10 years of impactful safety experience, Palermo has had the opportunity to work at the wing, Numbered Air Force, and MAJCOM level which has continuously expanded her expertise.

In Palermo's 20 years of military service, her safety supervision and outstanding reputation led to her to be selected as manager of the Air Combat Command Safety Directorate. Overseeing programs affecting more than 156,000 Airmen, 1,300 aircraft, and 24 weapons systems at 130 locations, as well as leading a rewrite of standards used by safety professionals demonstrated her commitment to safe practices and highlights her reason for being nominated for such an honor. She has been recognized numerous times for phenomenal performance, including "Safety Professional of the Year" in 2018 for U.S. Air Forces Central Command. Palermo earned the "Best Safety Office in the Air Force" while leading the Occupational Safety office at Shaw Air Force, South Carolina in 2020.

"I am honored to be receiving the NSC Rising Star Award as there are so many amazing and deserving safety professionals out there," said Palermo. "There is always something new to learn. Management must place a high focus on safety. Safety professionals must think about how to gain the support of the leadership and promote a positive safety culture at all organizational levels. Developing trust as a committed team member within the organization is the first step."



National Safety Council 2024 Annual Awards

Palermo directed the investigation for two physical training related fatalities identifying the need for proper identification and training to safeguard Airmen who possess the sickle cell trait. As the Safety Manager for the 380th Air Expeditionary Group, Al Dhafra Air Base, Qatar, she authored a Hazardous Energy Control training that was implemented base-wide and eradicating 20 hazards across four units. The program provided a safe environment for 3,600 personnel and \$8 billion in assets.

She embedded a culture of safety with a team of 12 safety professionals throughout the Republic of Korea where she drafted the first-ever safety guidance for the Ministry of Employment and Labor program encapsulating South Korean Nation Occupational Safety and Health laws. Notably, during her tenure at Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington from 2013 to 2017, Palermo directed safety operations for a 22-day humanitarian effort that aided the neighboring city with potable water during a per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) drinking water contamination emergency. This collaboration with military and civilian partners distributed over 150 thousand gallons of potable water to 10 thousand residents.

Palermo now oversees the occupational safety program for ACC covering 156,000 personnel, 1,300 aircraft, and 24 weapons systems across 5 NAFs, 34 wings and the USAF Warfare Center. She provides support to wings by creating and

implementing safety policies, procedures, and products tailored to the specific needs and requirements of ACC. Palermo's position is imperative to protect the resources we have in place to efficiently deliver training and education on various safety topics.

"I have had the amazing opportunity to work with and for so many great individuals throughout my career," said Palermo. "These individuals have helped mold me into the Safety professional I am today, and I cannot thank them enough."

Martin congratulated each of the award winners and spoke about the importance of the work they do.

"These 38 leaders, representing a wide range of industries, are truly the best and brightest in safety," said Martin.

"Through their dedication and enthusiasm, they have shown that improvement, innovation, and change are not only possible, but that they also help save lives. We thank each of this year's honorees for making the world a safer and better place for all."

# 4th Quarter FY24 Awards



**Flight Line Safety**  
TSgt Derrick R. Sherwood  
319 RW/SEF  
Grand Forks AFB, ND



**Pilot Safety**  
Capt William T. Lusk  
334 FS, 4 FW  
Seymour Johnson AFB, NC



**Unit Safety Representative**  
SrA Kasey L. Beach  
552 MXS, 552 ACW  
Tinker AFB, OK



**Safety Career Professional**  
TSgt Kevin L. Tuskey  
57 WG/SEG  
Nellis AFB, NV



**Weapons Safety Professional**  
TSgt Justin S. Inman  
319 RW/SEW  
Grand Forks AFB, ND



**Aircrew Safety Award**  
LOBO 49  
49 TES, 53 WG  
Barksdale AFB, LA



**Aviation Maintenance Safety**  
333d FGS Specialist/Production  
333 FGS, 4 FW  
Seymour Johnson AFB, NC



**Unit Safety**  
436th Training Squadron  
552 ACW  
Dyess AFB, TX

*Congratulations*





Air Combat Command Annual Safety Awards

# Congratulations

Fiscal Year 2024 Award Winners!

**AIRCREW AWARD\***

Capt Richard S. Blanchard III  
 Capt Nathan R. Agner  
 391 FS, 366 FW  
 Mountain Home AFB, ID

**PILOT AWARD\***

Maj Matthew L. Neelon  
 99 RS, 9 RW  
 Beale AFB, CA

**INDIVIDUAL AVIATION MAINTENANCE SAFETY AWARD\***

TSgt Jacob A. Heater  
 9 MXG, 9 RW  
 Beale AFB, CA

**TEAM AVIATION MAINTENANCE SAFETY AWARD\***

Quality Assurance Section  
 24 FS, 366 FW  
 NAS JRB, TX

**OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY CAREER PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR\***

SSgt David R. Weaver, Jr.  
 23 WG  
 Moody AFB, GA

**OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY CIVILIAN OF THE YEAR\***

Mr. Larry A. Ebell  
 55 WG  
 Offutt AFB, NE

**INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR WEAPONS SAFETY\***

TSgt Richard D. Olney  
 325 FW/SEW  
 Tyndall AFB, FL

**TEAM ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR WEAPONS SAFETY\***

Thunder Weapons Team  
 757 AMXS, 57 WG  
 Nellis AFB, NV

**NUCLEAR SURETY INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD\***

TSgt Ronald R. Crawshaw  
 72 TES, 53 WG  
 Whiteman AFB, MO

**NUCLEAR SURETY TEAM ACHIEVEMENT AWARD\***

Coyote Nuclear Surety Team  
 72 TES, 53 WG  
 Whiteman AFB, MO

**SAFETY SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD\***

Safety Office  
 55WG  
 Offutt AFB, NE

**CHIEF OF SAFETY OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD CATEGORY II\***

Safety Office  
 366 FW  
 Mountain Home AFB, ID

**CATEGORY III\***

Safety Office  
 53 WG [USAFWC]  
 Eglin AFB, FL

**CATEGORY V\***

436 Training Squadron  
 552 ACW  
 Dyess AFB, TX

**SAFETY CIVILIAN PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR AWARD\***

Mr. Brian J. Reynolds  
 366 FW  
 Mountain Home AFB, ID

**SAFETY NCO OF THE YEAR AWARD\***

SSgt Donald Z. Brown  
 366 FW  
 Mountain Home AFB, ID

**SAFETY SENIOR NCO OF THE YEAR AWARD\***

MSgt Omar A. Salih  
 820 RHS, 800 RHG  
 Nellis AFB, NV

**SAFETY OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARD\***

Capt Brandon S. Shapiro  
 319 RW  
 Grand Forks AFB, ND

**FLIGHT LINE SAFETY ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

TSgt Charles B. Bolles  
 367 FS, 495 FG  
 Homestead ARB, FL

**UNIT SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE YEAR AWARD**

TSgt Brian A. Palacios  
 355 AMXS, 355 WG  
 Nellis AFB, NV

**COMMANDER'S AWARD FOR SAFETY**

Safety Office  
 15 AF  
 Shaw AFB, SC

**WING CHIEF OF SAFETY OF THE YEAR AWARD**

Lt Col Ryan D. Geoffroy  
 53 WG  
 Eglin AFB, FL

**WING SAFETY PROGRAM OF THE YEAR AWARD**

Safety Office  
 366 FW  
 Mountain Home AFB, ID

\* These winners also represented ACC at the Air Force-level safety awards competition.



Mishap Statistics Scoreboard

FY25 Flight <span style="float: right;">Thru 31 Dec 2024</span>			
	Fatal	Aircraft Destroyed	Class A Aircraft Damage
15 AF	0	✈	0
16 AF	0	0	0
USAFWC	0	0	0
ANG	0	0	0
AFRC	0	0	0
CONTRACT	0	0	0
COCOM	0	0	0

FY25 Occupational <span style="float: right;">Thru 31 Dec 2024</span>			
	Class A Fatal	Class A Non-Fatal	Class B
AFCENT	0	0	0
USAFWC	0	0	0
12 AF	0	0	0
15 AF	1	0	1
16 AF	0	0	0

FY25 Weapons <span style="float: right;">Thru 31 Dec 2024</span>					
	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D	Class E
ACC	0	0	0	0	1

Legend

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

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

Symbols for Mishap Aircraft



Flight Notes

ACC had one Class A mishap during the first quarter in FY25, resulting in the total loss of an MQ-9. Aircrew must understand their systems and mitigate risk with thorough mission planning and coordination. If incidents do occur, reporting is the first step to future mishap prevention. When in doubt of reporting criteria, reach out to your wing safety office for clarification.

Occupational Notes

Air Combat Command sustained one Class A Off-duty 2-WL PMV (Motorcycle) mishap during the first quarter of FY25. The mishap occurred when a 4-WL PMV turned in front of a 2-WL PMV and the 2-WL PMV struck the rear of the car resulting in a fatality. The Class B Off-duty mishap involved a 2-WL PMV that struck a 4-WL PMV at an intersection, resulting in a Permanent Partially Disabling injury. As we continue into FY25, we all need focus on our safety and the safety of those around us. Make sure you take the time to assess your situation and apply sound risk management. Let's work together to get through the next quarter mishap free.

Weapons Notes

We're off to a good start in the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2025, with only one reported weapons mishap. Also impressive is that this mishap was not caused by personnel error; it occurred when a 30 mm gun system jammed during in-flight firing operations. Fortunately, the damage was limited to a single, punctured 30 mm round. Our success underscores a commitment to safety and operational excellence. Let's continue this trend through the remainder of FY25 and future years.

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

**All the Gear,  
All the Time**

PAGE 4

**May is**  
**Motorcycle**  
**Safety Awareness Month**



# Spring Cleaning

the SAFE way

Lift with your legs keeping your back straight

Be careful walking on wet surfaces

Keep walkways clear of clutter

Keep 3 points of contact on ladders

Never mix household cleaning products

Background photo by Zaitsava Olga/shutterstock.com



# National Weather Service



## LIGHTNING SAFETY FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

### WHEN THUNDER ROARS, GO INDOORS!

Each year in the United States, there are about 25 million cloud-to-ground lightning flashes and about 300 people struck by lightning. Of those struck, about 30 people are killed and others suffer lifelong disabilities. Most of these tragedies can be prevented. When thunderstorms threaten, get inside a building with plumbing and electricity, or a hard-topped metal vehicle!

The National Weather Service collects information on weather-related deaths to learn how to prevent these tragedies. Many lightning victims say they were "caught" outside in the storm and couldn't get to a safe place. Other victims simply waited too long before seeking shelter. With proper planning, similar tragedies can be avoided.

Some people were struck because they went back outside too soon. Stay inside a safe building or vehicle for at least 30 minutes after you hear the last thunder. While 30 minutes may seem like a long time, it is necessary to be safe.

Finally, some victims were struck inside homes or buildings while they were using electrical equipment or corded phones. Others were in contact with plumbing, outside doors, or window frames. Avoid contact with these electrical conductors when a thunderstorm is nearby!

### AVOID THE LIGHTNING THREAT

- ✓ **Have a lightning safety plan.** Know where you'll go for safety and ensure you'll have enough time to get there.
- ✓ **Postpone activities.** Consider postponing activities if thunderstorms are forecast.
- ✓ **Monitor the weather.** Once outside, look for signs of a developing or approaching thunderstorm such as towering clouds, darkening skies, or flashes of lightning.
- ✓ **Get to a safe place.** If you hear thunder, even a distant rumble, seek safety immediately. Fully enclosed buildings with wiring and plumbing are best. A hard-topped metal vehicle with the windows closed is also safe. Stay inside until 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder. Sheds, picnic shelters, tents or covered porches do NOT protect you from lightning.
- ✓ **If you hear thunder, don't use a corded phone except in an emergency.** Cordless phones and cell phones are safe to use.
- ✓ **Keep away from electrical equipment and plumbing.** Lightning can travel through the wiring and plumbing if your building is struck. Don't take a bath or shower, or wash dishes during a storm.



Lightning discharge on a golf green. Photo: E. Philip Krider



Stadiums and other outdoor venues should have a lightning safety plan. Photo: NOAA

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Kirtland AFB, NM

# All the Gear, All the Time

Air Force Safety Center (AFSEC)

Riding a motorcycle brings a sense of connection to the world that you don't get from riding in a car. For many, it feeds a passion to be free, but it also comes with responsibility. Riding requires focus and awareness of what is going on around you at all times. It also calls for a commitment to wearing protective gear.

Dr. Craig Martell, recent DoD chief digital and artificial intelligence officer, described his experience while out on a group ride, during which he lost control of his motorcycle and ended up shiny side down. He credits his protective gear with keeping a bad situation from becoming worse.

"I was participating in the annual ARCH™ motorcycle owners' ride last October in Sonoma County, California, and I made a mistake," said Martell. "My fundamental mistake was that I moved from the medium-speed group to the fast group, and that was a stupid idea, because as soon as I got in that fast group, I realized they were going too fast for my comfort. I should have pulled back to the medium group to make sure I was riding at my own comfort level."

The ride took the group from the mountains down to the California coast. A beautiful ride along the coast, over miles of winding roads with cliffs dropping off into the ocean.

During one of those decreasing radius corners, Martel squeezed the front brake while leaning pretty far over, and the bike slid out from under him.

"I wasn't going fast ... probably 25 or 30, maybe 35," said Martell. "The bike has an anti-lock brake system, but not mid-corner ABS, and so anybody who rides knows if you squeeze the front brake, the back is going to continue to go."

As he recounted the experience of going down and hitting the ground, Martel described his philosophy on the importance of wearing the right gear, "I am an all-the-gear, all-the-time person. So, I always ride with all the gear, even if I'm just going for a short ride, and I had just bought the airbag vest the day before. I always want to make sure I have maximal gear, and I knew other folks on the ride also wore that vest."

Dr. Craig Martell



Martell bought a version of airbag vest that is more like a jacket. It fits under the leathers, and the user takes out back padding and shoulder pads. It expands over your shoulders, chest, and back, and then comes up under the neck. It has accelerometers and a gyroscope. If the rider leans too far or starts tumbling, it deploys.

Studying his gear before the ride, he singled out his leather boots as the weakest point in the attire. The pants he wore were chosen specifically because they had the right slide coefficient with good hip and knee pads.

“So, I go down on a low side,” Martell said. “I thought, ‘OK, I’m going down,’ and, to be honest with you, I had no idea what to do. I was nervous. I was scared.”

“The vest worked perfectly. It poofed up, and I didn’t really feel it at all. I thought ‘Oh, that kind of felt like a mattress. That wasn’t so bad.’ Then I hit my hip and I thought ‘Oh, OK. Well, that’s what the pain is supposed to feel like.’”

The bike slid for a while, with Martel hanging on. When he let go, the steering turned, and the bike fell on his foot, crushing all five metatarsals. It was so bad that doctors weren’t sure whether his foot was going to heal to full capability for a long time.

The airbag vest worked flawlessly. He didn’t suffer a single injury to his torso, shoulders, or collarbone area. The vest even supported his head enough that it didn’t contact the ground.

“It worked perfectly, just perfectly, but my right leg was completely purple from the knee to my hip. As soon as I can buy some airbag pants, I’m going do that, too,” said Martell.

Along with the need for good gear, Martel emphasized training and practicing rider skills for new and existing riders.

“One of the big things we push with our Department of the Air Force riders is practicing and building skills. We actually go out to a parking lot and work on low-speed skills, because our entire program is wrapped around the idea,” said David Brandt, motorcycle program manager for the Air and Space Forces. “PPE is really for when your skills fail, and you should be using your skills as often as possible before you need them.”

“I simply wasn’t aware of the fact that the bike I was riding needed a different kind of handling,” said Martell. “I didn’t even realize the dangers of squeezing the front brake mid corner until it happened to me, and now it makes perfect sense, from a physics perspective. You have to train, train, train with your equipment.”

The DAF Rider program encourages all riders to seek the right training at the right time and with the right bike. Go to <https://www.safety.af.mil/Divisions/Occupational-Safety-Division/Air-Force-Rider/> for more information. 🗡️



# #DAFRider

## GEAR UP AND RIDE SAFE

### ALL THE GEAR, ALL THE TIME (ATGATT)



MOTORCYCLE SAFETY GEAR



PROTECTIVE GEAR IS MANDATORY AT ALL TIMES, ON AND OFF BASE



# Can I Make it Home?

By SSgt Lendon F. Beltran

As a security forces member, your duty is not just a job, but a commitment to safeguarding the lives and property of others. Your 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. shift is not just a test of endurance, but a testament to your dedication and resilience.

The clock strikes 7:00 a.m., signaling the end of another long and grueling shift. You feel the mixture of exhaustion and relief. The night has been filled with patrols, surveillance of areas, and responding to various incidents across the

base. But now, as the first light of dawn begins to creep over the horizon, you finally are free to head home.

Stepping out into the cool morning air, you make your way to your car, your muscles protesting with every step. Fatigue weighs heavily on you: Should you take a quick nap inside your car? With your 30-minute journey home still ahead, you decide to push through. You think, "It's only 30 minutes." As you settle into the driver's seat and start the engine, a wave of weariness comes over you.

You wonder: "Can I make it home?" The long hours have taken their toll, and your eyelids feel heavy as you leave the installation and merge onto the roadway home.

The road stretches out before you, but your mind is elsewhere, mesmerized by the thought of that soft Tempur-Pedic™ mattress that awaits you in your bedroom, and the promise of much-needed rest. It is a dangerous distraction, one that can leave you vulnerable to the hazards of the road.

As you drive along the road,

your mind drained by the long, 3-day work cycle, your eyes close for what seems like only a second. As you open your eyes, panic surges through you. You hit the brakes, your heart pounding in your chest, as you narrowly avoid a collision. The screech of tires echoes in the early morning air, as the other car speeds away into the distance, leaving you shaken but unharmed. It is a close call, too close for comfort, and it leaves you trembling from the surge of adrenaline, as you pull over to the side of the road.

As you sit there, trying to steady your breathing and calm your racing thoughts, a wave of realization washes over you. You have come terrifyingly close to disaster—mere inches away from a potentially life-altering accident. It is a reminder of just how quickly things can go wrong, and of the importance of staying alert and focused, especially when tired.

In the midst of the fear and uncertainty, there also is a sense of gratitude. You realize you have been given a second chance, and are reminded of

just how precious life truly is. As you resume the journey home, the events of the night still fresh in your mind, you silently vow never again to take the simple act of driving for granted, and always to remain vigilant and alert behind the wheel, no matter how tired or distracted you might be.

As you finally pull into your driveway, you can't help feeling a deep sense of relief that you escaped disaster. You've made it home, but still wonder about how differently things might have turned out if you simply had taken that nap. 🚗

# Tearing Up the Field:

An Unexpected Lesson in Sports Safety

*“Let’s make warming up our pre-game safety MVP, not just an afterthought.”*

By SrA DeLeon R. Massheder

Participating in recreational sports is a blast—until it isn’t. Without proper preparations, those friendly games of flag football or ultimate frisbee can turn into injury tales that we’d rather not share. The leading culprit behind these tales of woe? Skipping or skimping on the warm-ups. Think of your muscles as non-morning people. They need a little time to wake up and stretch before diving into the day’s activities. Skipping this wake-up call can lead to strains, sprains, and the occasional awkward stumble that becomes the talk of the town—or at least of the team.

Unfortunately for me, I am not a stranger to these unasked-for injuries. It started like any other tournament day, except that I was extremely tired from dealing with sick kids the night before. I thought it would be such an easy day that I didn’t need to waste my energy warming up. How wrong I was: Skipping one of the most important steps in recreational sports proved disastrous.

In the first inning of my softball tournament, I was playing center field. The batter hit a flyball almost straight to me. I thought this would be the perfect catch to begin this long day of games. As I sprinted to the spot, I heard a loud “pop.” It was almost as if a balloon had burst next to my ear. The next moment, I fell to the ground, with crippling pain in my left knee. The paramedics came out right away, and took me to the hospital. I had completely severed my ACL and meniscus—and missed the catch.

What’s the best way to avoid a cringe-worthy moment like mine? It’s simple: Make warm-ups your new pre-game ritual. No, a quick toe-touch and half-hearted arm circle won’t count. We’re talking about a proper warm-up, one that gets the blood flowing, muscles moving, and hopefully, avoids any embarrassing faceplants on the field.

Start with dynamic stretching exercises that target the muscles you will be using during your activity. If you are a runner, think of leg swings and high knees. For basketball enthusiasts, consider arm circles and lunges to be your new best friends. And for the other activities? Jumping jacks are universally accepted as the I-am-getting-serious-now warm-up move.

Pair these dynamic stretches with a bit of light aerobic activity. Think slow jog or brisk walk. This duo not only gets your muscles limber, but also elevates your heart rate, and prepares your body for the athletic feats—or at least attempts—ahead.

Of course, warming up is just the start. Proper gear, hydration, and a healthy dose of listening to your body’s Hey-maybe-slow-down signals are also key players in the injury prevention game.

Let’s make warming up our pre-game safety MVP, not just an afterthought. By investing a few extra minutes in preparation and properly educating ourselves in sports safety, we can enjoy our recreational sports with more confidence and camaraderie.

We’ll also have fewer “Remember-that-time?” injury stories. Now, lace up those sneakers, grab your water, and let’s play safe out there!



U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Grace Glottelty, 9th Operations Support Squadron weather journeyman, catches a ball while competing for the All-Air Force Women’s Softball Team during the Armed Forces Softball Championship. Photo by SSgt Frederick Brown

# Spring Cleaning

By Dr. Richard Cook

As they say, “Spring is in the air.” The milder weather does more than excite us: The warmer temperatures, lengthening days, fresh air, and evidence of new life everywhere can combine to become The Cleaning Bug. Once bitten, many of us decide our homes need a good spring cleaning. We can see it all: windows open, sunlight streaming in, breezes blowing, as we go through the house with mop, bucket, and rag. Whistling a happy tune, we look forward to the satisfaction of having made our part of the world a little nicer. All that is well and good; while we’re at it, let’s make certain we’re doing it all safely. A few easy-to-follow tips will help make your spring cleaning efficient and safe.



Photo by Natali\_Mis/shutterstock.com

## One Thing at a Time.

Decluttering is not cleaning, but you can slip into it if you’re not paying attention. Dealing with a child’s toys or box of old photos can unlock the gate to Memory Lane. While a stroll isn’t bad in itself, it can bring spring cleaning to a halt, and leave you with a bigger mess than before. The added clutter can block your path and create a tripping hazard.

**You Had One Job.** You can declutter, or you can clean, but not both. First, get rid of the clutter by organizing some things and disposing of others. Then—and only then—start cleaning. We tend to have accidents when distracted. Focusing on a single task will help keep you safe.

**Don’t Go It Alone.** Always get help when moving large pieces of furniture or appliances. Large pieces might not be heavy, but they can be awkward to handle by yourself. Remember to lift with your legs, not your back. Your grandmother’s clock will thank you, and so will your joints.

**One Small Step(stool) for Mankind...** When using a ladder or stepstool, maintain three points of contact, have another person hold the ladder, and don’t lean out past your bellybutton. Never stand on the top of a ladder or stepstool.

**Slippery When Wet.** Keep floors dry and free from oil and grease. Wear closed-toe shoes, not sandals or flip-flops.

Even a small amount of liquid can be dangerous. Clean up spills immediately.

**Outta My Way.** Keep boxes and other items out of pathways, especially stairs and landings. Keep tools and cleaning equipment organized, especially electrical cords.

**One at a Time.** Don’t carry too many items at once. Unless you work part-time as a juggler, it’s not going to end well. Saving yourself an extra trip is not worth a trip to the ER.

**Read The Label.** If it reads “Do not mix with bleach,” “Use only with adequate ventilation,” or “Wear protective clothing,” they

mean it. Mixing cleaning products can create toxic gases such as chlorine, and people actually have died while cleaning confined spaces like bathrooms. Use all products according to the manufacturers’ directions, wear rubber/latex gloves, and make sure the area is ventilated.

**Not Just for Superheroes.** Wear a mask when doing dusty things. All that cleaning raises a great deal of dust. Also—believe it or not—many homes built before 1990 may contain asbestos, a known carcinogen. Even ordinary household dust can make breathing difficult.

**In Over Your Head.** NEVER leave buckets of water—clean or dirty—around the home.

Small children can drown when they lean forward to look into a bucket (or toilet). Drowning is possible in as little as one inch of water. The head is the heaviest part of a small child, making it easy for the child to fall over into a container. Containers filled with liquid often weigh more than the child, and won’t tip over when the child falls in.

**Don’t Rush Me.** Faster doesn’t mean cleaner. Fatigue and haste are a dangerous combination, and lead to clumsy mistakes. If you’re tired, take a break and come back to the task later. Resist the temptation to rush through to the end just to be finished. Slow down and do it right.

**Clean Up After You Clean Up.** Once you’ve finished cleaning, put everything away. EVERYTHING. All the things you’ve brought out: mop, broom, rags, cleaning products, vacuum, cords, ladders, and everything else. Keep in mind that the job isn’t finished until everything has been put in its place.

By following these tips, your spring cleaning can be as safe as it is productive. 🍀

# Motorcycle Safety Begins with You

By SrA Christian X. Silvera with contributions by Mr. Adam L. Twigg

As spring approaches, the weather becomes ideal for motorcycle riding. Before heading out on the road, it's important for all personnel to be aware of specific safety regulations and precautions.

According to The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, wearing a helmet reduces the risk of death by 37% for riders, and 41% for passengers. While some states do not mandate helmets for motorcycle riders over the age of 21, Air Force Instruction (AFI) requires full PPE—including a helmet.

DAFI 91-207, the Air Force Traffic Safety Program, also states that all Airmen must complete a motorcycle safety course and wear appropriate personal protective gear.

"These Air Force requirements supersede those of your state," said Adam Twigg, Motorcycle Safety Program manager. "They must be adhered to by military personnel, whether they ride on or off base."

Before riding a motorcycle on or off base, a rider must first check in with their Motorcycle Safety Representative. They then will create an account in the Air Force Safety Automated System to track all

relevant information through the Motorcycle Unit Safety Tracking Tool (MUSTT). MUSTT monitors rider training, briefing requirements, and other specific details such as license status and the type of motorcycle operated.

There are two required briefings, the first of which is the initial motorcycle safety briefing, to be accomplished within 30 days of a new rider checking into the command or 30 days after they become a new rider. "This briefing is intended to be completed with the Squadron Commander, MSR and the rider," said Twigg. "It is so that all parties

are aware of the service member's riding status, and what the expectations are from all parties in order to foster a

partnership and commitment to safe riding." The second briefing requirement is the pre-season briefing. It highlights expectations, trends, policy changes, local riding conditions and risk management.

The training process for motorcycle riders involves several steps. First, riders must obtain a permit to enroll in Air Force-sponsored courses. The initial requirement is the Level 1 Basic Rider Course (BRC), followed by BRC2 or Advanced Rider Course (ARC), with ARC recommended for sport bike riders. BRC2 must be completed within 60 days of Level 1, and Level 3 sustainment training is required every five years.

Whether you're a new or experienced rider, it's crucial to complete all necessary requirements before getting on the road. Contact your wing or unit safety representative, or motorcycle safety representative, for more information.

Motorcycle safety begins with training—and you. 🏍️

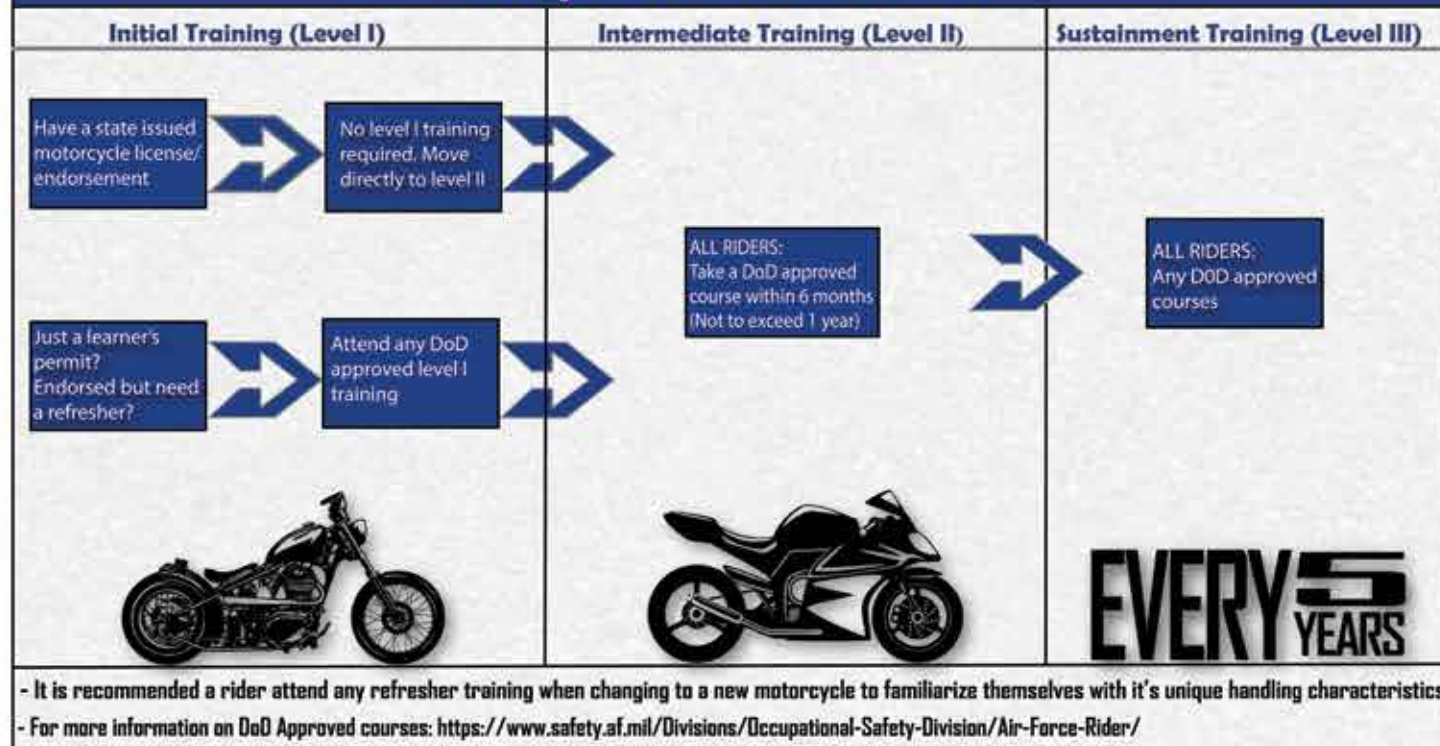


Department of the Air Force Rider

## #DAFRider Timeline Right Training ... Right Time ... Right Bike



### So you want to ride?



Every DAFRider should be physically capable, mentally prepared, and their motorcycle mechanically sound.

Photo by Edward Johnson