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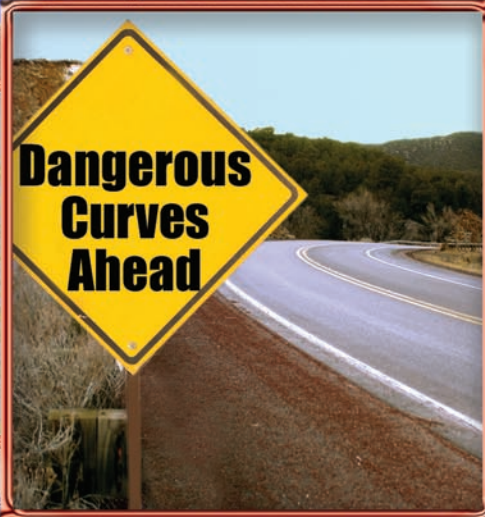
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AF Deputy Chief of Safety Q&A

Editor's note: In October 2003, Mr. Greg Alston became the Air Force Deputy Chief of Safety and the Executive Director of the HQ Air Force Safety Center. He is a retired Air Force colonel and a command pilot, with more than 2000 flying hours in the F-4, F-16, AT-38 and F-117A. He has been working in safety almost continuously since July 1991, when he received an assignment to the Pentagon as the Chief of Flight Safety Programs. In 1995 Mr. Alston became 49th Fighter Wing Chief of Safety at Holloman AFB, N.M., where his unit won the National Safety Council Award of Honor and the U.S. Air Force Explosives Safety Award for overall safety programs. He served two years as Deputy Division Chief for Plans, Programs and Policies at the Air Force Safety Center and two years as Air Combat Command Director of Safety at Langley AFB, Va. At ACC, his efforts led to record reductions in flight and ground mishap rates and his office won the Secretary of the Air Force's Mr. Will L. Tubbs award for the best ground safety program. Before his current assignment, he was the Deputy Chief of Safety and Chief of the Safety Issues Division at the Pentagon.

What is your safety-related background?

I've been in safety since 1991, when I got an assignment to the Pentagon as the Chief of Flight Safety Programs. We were just standing up Safety under the Chief of Staff—it used to be under the IG. I've been in Safety ever since, except for one year as a squadron commander. I left the Pentagon in January 1995, to be the Chief of Safety at Holloman AFB, N.M. In July 1997, I came up here, to work in SEP—Plans, Policy and Programs. Did that for two years, and then was requested to go be the Chief of Safety for ACC in July 1999. In July 2001, I went to be the Deputy Chief of Safety at the Pentagon. Then in October 2003, I came here. I've been teaching safety for at least 10 years, for Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. I'm a member of

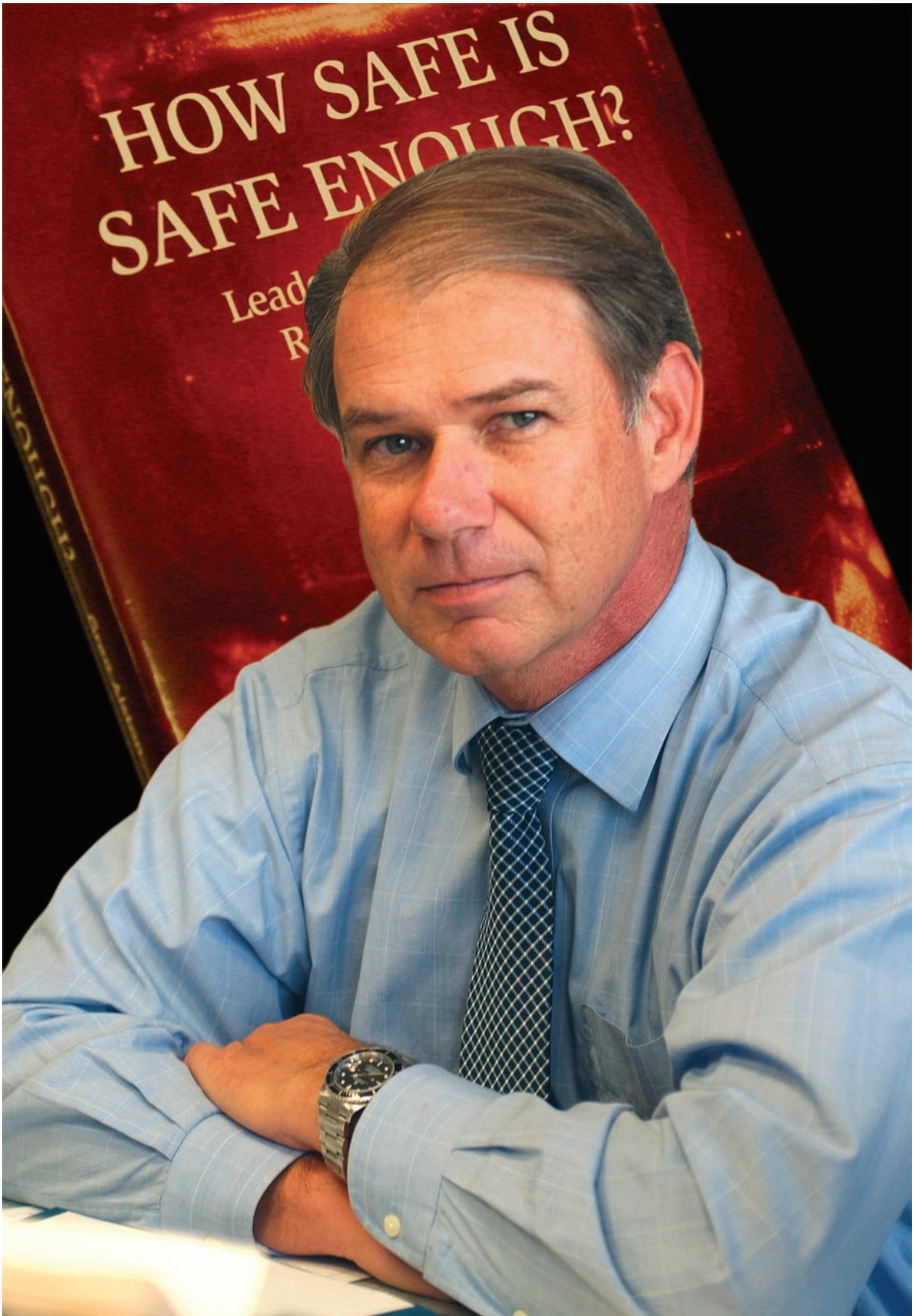
their CASE Advisory Council—Center for Aerospace Safety Education. I wrote a textbook on safety, called "How Safe Is Safe Enough?" It's used in Australia and the Pacific Rim, and it's being introduced to the U.S. academic field. I've worked directly for the last six Air Force Chiefs of Safety—Generals Cole, Godsey, Gideon, Peppe, Hess and now Maj. Gen. McFann.

As you serve as the Air Force Deputy Chief of Safety, what are your priorities for improving our safety efforts?

My priority is to focus on risk. On my first day here, I said, "I want to make the Safety Center the center of gravity for mishap prevention." Part of this is that for the last couple of years, we've been trying to change our culture from safety data collection to one of mishap-prevention. To do that, we've got to focus on risk and prevent the mishap before it happens. Part of that is standing up the AFOSC—the Air Force Operational Safety Council. We just had our second meeting. Gen. Moseley, the Air Force Vice Chief of Staff, chairs it. This is helping to change our culture to mishap prevention, because if the top buys into it, then everyone will follow. So here we have the corporate top of the Air Force talking safety, talking risk, and I think that's going to help focus on risk management. To change the culture takes five years. We're engineering this culture. It could take five years to where people think daily, automatically, about "Where's the risk and what can I do about it?" The one thing about risk we have to remember is we're not looking for the minimum amount of risk—we're looking for the right amount of risk. Because there's risk in every activity—we have to co-exist with it. We can't eliminate it.

What do you believe the Air Force can do to improve flight safety?

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There are a couple of things. All the easy things have been done, so nothing is going to be easy. What we're up against right now is ourselves—our humanness. Human factors are causing our mishaps. We actually have a very good flight safety record, but we have a long way to go. To do that, we have to focus on human factors. Part of that is leadership. Humans really make all the rules, so it's what kind of equipment we acquire, what we design, how we maintain that equipment, how we train to fly it, how we operate it, how we supervise. Humans are involved at every stage, so when a part breaks, it's not a maintenance mishap, necessarily—humans designed the part, we maintain it—so we have to really focus on our approach to risk and identify risk through leadership. "Don't accept unnecessary risk" is the bottom line. We had our best year ever in flight safety last year. Part of that is because of this effort to change the culture. This was well before Secretary Rumsfeld's 50 percent challenge—we're already doing it. Creating the AFOSC, working on ORM, getting leadership involved, and it's paying off this year.

What about reducing vehicle mishaps?

We're already doing a lot of good things. We're sharing with industry. The Motorcycle Safety Foundation has some great ideas, and we're embracing those. Insurance companies have really good ideas on how to prevent accidents, so we're embracing those. We've already redesigned training for our young folks—initial training and follow-on training. Because our biggest risk is in 18-24-year-olds. The other thing I'd like to do is to train our mid-grade NCOs on how to mentor an 18-year-old. What does an 18-year-old need? The squadron commander is not going to be his role model—his or her role model will be the staff sergeant or the tech sergeant. The person they work with, who's provid-

ing that one-on-one leadership daily. If we can get that into Airman Leadership School, teaching those folks how to mentor an 18-year-old to stay alive. What do they need? Those are the ones who are going to work all day Friday, drive all Friday night to get to the beach, party all weekend and drive back Sunday night so they can get to work on time. They need to know better. The staff sergeant and tech sergeant can mentor them on how to behave better.

What special safety concerns are posed by our war efforts?

Distractions. In flight safety, we're not going to compromise anything—the pilots are going to get crew rest; maintenance will not compromise safety—they're not going to cut corners; they just don't do that. If an airplane can't fly, we don't need it to fly—we're not being overrun, so they're not going to take a risk. The bigger problems are distractions. Being away from home, and we just need to be aware of that.

You're out trying to go fight the war and your wife calls and the car won't start. You're not there; you feel helpless; you're distracted. Your daughter's going to be homecoming queen and you can't walk her out on the field. Those kinds of distractions—being deployed away from home. That said, in wartime, people seem to focus more, too, so we have fewer mishaps during war. More of the mishaps are back here, in training, not in the deployed locations. There are still the distractions—you're wondering where you're going to deploy to; if the terrorists are going to hit your hometown ... There are a lot of distractions in the war on terror. The distracters are part of our humanness.

Speaking of our war efforts, do you see any special concerns with the support side of aviation—our main-

“ ... our biggest risk is in 18-24-year-olds.”

tainers, weapons, security, supply, transportation and the rest of the Air Force?

There are things we are aware of, such as experience levels—especially in Security Forces, where we have young folks who are working 12-hour days who are deployed a lot. I think we're handling it pretty well, as an Air Force. Maintenance troops are working hard, too. Fatigue could be an issue. I think our leaders are aware of these issues and are managing it pretty well.

What role do you believe supervisors and co-workers play in ensuring our Air Force works and plays safely?

Supervisors are important. Co-workers and peers are very important. We used to house people in dorms, where they had a lot of support to guide them along the way and help them out. Now we're trying to give young people privacy and improve their quality of life, but what we're actually doing is taking away, in some ways, their support group—their peers. You've heard the old saying, "Friends don't let friends drive drunk"?

Co-workers and friends don't let friends drive without their seatbelt on, or jump from one balcony to another. Friends need to step up. Supervision has a huge role, but peers take care of each other. Use the buddy system—don't let your friend be stupid and take unnecessary risk.

How does Operational Risk Management (ORM) relate to our on- and off-duty safety efforts?

ORM plays a big role. We all understand ORM—we're trained in it. It needs to carry over to Personal Risk Management. It's an individual who is the final risk acceptor. We all do it. When you drive home—you as an individual are accepting that risk of getting on the road. If they're flying an airplane or rid-

ing a motorcycle—it all comes down to the individual. We should all use the "ACT" acronym—A-C-T:

- Assess your environment for hazards;
- Consider your options; and
- Take action to live.

If we can ingrain that in our force—it all comes down to personal risk management. A person will accept all kinds of risk. Gen. Jumper will accept risk for the Air Force. One person, ultimately, is going to accept certain risks. The wing commander is going to accept certain risks for the wing. A squadron commander will accept risk for the squadron. Everyone else is sort of forced to accept that risk, but all risk is accepted by somebody. At the end of the day, you are the final risk acceptor in your life, for your actions.

“Assess your environment for hazards; Consider your options; and Take action to live.”

What do you see as the greatest safety problem in off-duty activities?

It comes back to the personal risk management thing. People aren't really assessing what hazards are around them well enough. I think we do an OK job—better than the private sector—but we have a long

way to go. They're accepting unnecessary risks. A lot of times, when you hear about fatalities, they're not paying attention, they're distracted, they're speeding. Like the guy here who was going 100 mph down Central on a motorcycle, popped a wheelie, lost control and died. There was no margin of error. We lose a lot of people on motorcycles. They buy a big bike they're not used to—proficiency issues for motorcyclists is a trend we're seeing. Accepting unnecessary risk—you need to consider, "How am I going to get injured or killed?" and then don't.

What are your goals as the Air Force Deputy Chief of Safety?

I'd like to complete the transforma-

continued on next page

tion to a risk-management culture for the Air Force. Giving the Senior Airmen the mentoring training. Give all levels of PME ORM training. Talk about risk management, and especially emphasize personal risk management. Having the AFOSC, where the corporate top of the Air Force is talking about risk. Identifying risk and zeroing in on it. If we do all this routinely, we have a mishap-prevention culture. I think we can do a lot better. All mishaps are preventable. If you're sitting at a stoplight and someone hits you, when you didn't do anything wrong, even that one is preventable. It may be out of your particular control, but it's preventable by the other guy. Sometimes they're out of our control, but they are preventable. So if they're all preventable, then by default, zero should be possible. But it's going to be hard to achieve because of human factors. We have to really address the human. That's what I want to achieve. Where we're looking at where our fallibilities are. The human condition is fallible. What I mean by that is, we are subject to perception problems, physiological problems, psychological problems, fatigue, distractions, father died, money problems, you could be ill—all those things can lead to a mishap. So, we need to zero in on that. Our condition is fallible—we can't change the human condition. We can change the conditions in which we work. Better training, better leadership, more awareness, technology to protect us from ourselves. When we're thinking like that, we'll be where I want to be. It takes five years, so we still have another three years to go to see if that culture took effect.

What changes are you seeing in the Air Force culture?

“ ... we are subject to perception problems, physiological problems, psychological problems, fatigue, distractions, money problems—all those things can lead to a mishap.”

It started two years ago—took a while to get it rolling. Probably the biggest accomplishment is the AFOSC. Gen. Jumper approved it, Gen. Moseley, the CV, chairs it, all the Air Staff two-letters are members, plus many others, including every MAJCOM vice commander, is a member of that Council. Those three- and four-star generals are talking risk, talking safety, and now after talking about it in the AFOSC, they're going to make sure their commands are doing it. We're trying to infuse from the bottom, too, getting to those young individuals—that's the biggest challenge—better training up front, ORM training at all the PME levels and basic training. Heightening awareness is already taking place, and we're seeing it in the positive trends we have. It was about two years ago, when we started. We're seeing the results this year. We've had the best flying year we've ever had. That's the maintainers, the pilots, the whole supervision of the operation. We're

all embracing the new culture of mishap prevention. Granted, it's not where we need to be yet—we still have some work to do.

Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld has challenged DoD to reduce mishaps by 50 percent. How will the Air Force work to reach that goal?

We've already been doing that. We started before he ever gave us that challenge, by engineering a mishap-prevention culture, by establishing the AFOSC, so the corporate top of the Air Force is talking risk. By improving our driver-training education programs. Working with industry to find ways to save lives on the weekends. We've already started



that, focusing on some of the technologies, like the engine-improvement program. For this challenge, in destroyed aircraft we're already down 45 percent from the FY02 baseline. In the destroyed aircraft rate, we're down 48 percent. In aviation fatalities, we're down one-third. In PMV fatalities, we're down 14 percent. We've got a ways to go, but the trends seem to be going in the right direction. This was all started before Secretary Rumsfeld's challenge. In some ways we can meet that. If we don't change our mission, which has risk—it's an activity, so there's risk—we can make headway by training, supervision, and technology—some technologies take years to develop. While we might not get 50 percent in every category, we're heading toward that mark.

The Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen. John Jumper, has initiated a program of motorcycle mentorship. What's your view of that and how do you see it affecting Air Force riders?

I like the idea. I used to sit in meetings with Gen. Jumper and Secretary Roche on motorcycle fatalities, and it would just be agonizing—"What can we do?" We had the motorcycle safety summit. Gen. Jumper likes the "Wingman" term, and in this mentorship program, his first thought was, "We need a motorcycle wingman program, where young guys ride with older guys, to learn." I think it was AETC that actually called it a "mentorship program," and Gen. Jumper embraced that as the way ahead. Older, more experienced riders, teaching riding wisdom, mentoring the younger folks. It's a voluntary program, but highly encouraged. I think part of it is identifying who the motorcycle riders are. Do that during in-processing, and the squadron commander can talk to the young riders—all riders—about motorcycles. Encourage their people into this program. They go for rides on the weekends; they

talk about safety before they go. I'll be very surprised if it doesn't show some degree of success.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

At the levels I'm working, it's very nice to see the top generals in the Air Force—no kidding—embracing safety. They actually feel it's a duty, and we owe it to the nation and the families who are entrusting us with their loved ones, to take the best care of those people we can. We do that pretty well, but off-duty, it's tougher. Guys are out there dying alone—without a supervisor, without the first shirt, without a peer, getting into single-car accidents, and they die. So we've got to encourage individuals to take care of themselves, using personal risk management. We have the top-level support; now we need the bottom-level support. We need the individuals to believe in safety as much as the top generals do. ■

Weather or

MSGT GREGORY C. ROLFE
48 CMS/MXMPG
RAF Lakenheath

At almost every base where I've been stationed, part of the newcomer's briefing included the statement, "If you don't like the weather here, wait around 15 minutes!" But in England, it's different. Sure, the weather *can* change in 15 minutes. But, unlike other places, the weather here seems to actually *do* it.

To the motorist, a change in the weather means two things: roll up the windows and turn on the wipers. Oh yeah, and if you're safety-minded, turn on the headlights and slow down. To the motorcyclist, however, weather changes require a whole set of precautions unknown to the typical cage (car) driver. Over the years, I have managed to experience many weather changes while riding, and have become familiar with their effects:

Rain affects traction. When you trade four wheels for two, traction becomes twice as important. Speaking of traction, raindrops are not the only things that make you slide during a storm. Apparently, Water is a sociable individual, and brings his friends with him when he crosses the street. Stick, Mud and Gravel seem to be the favorites. And Water does not like to play with his friends on straight roads. Curves seem to provide the most enjoyment—the sharper the better.

I became closely acquainted with Water's friend, Gravel, four years ago while riding a little Honda 400 that I had bought for my wife. There had been rain, but it had tapered off a couple of hours earlier. As I entered a sharp right turn doing the posted 30 mph speed limit, I discovered that Water had gone home for the day, but Gravel was still playing in the street. Unfortunately, I discovered this by getting down onto the pavement to play with Gravel myself. Heck of a guy, Gravel is ... sticks with you through thick and thin. At least he stuck with me until I got back to the house and tweezed

most of him out of my arms, leg, and hip.

Wind can be a blast. I learned a lot about wind at Edwards AFB, California. Out there, you're constantly leaning into the wind. You wear out the sides of your tire treads before you wear out the middle. Funny thing about wind, as powerful as it is, it can be blocked by the smallest articles. I've always been amazed at how a 3-foot bush with five leaves on it can create a total dead space in a 35-mph wind. So, you're riding along, leaning at a 20-degree angle to counter the gusts trying to blow you over, and you pass this seemingly innocent bush on the side of the road. The wind that was holding you up disappears. If you're quick, you can recover your balance and stay upright without falling over. If you're quicker, you can lean back into the resulting gust that happens once you're past the bush in time to



Not to Ride



Maybe it's the snowfall itself: wearing goggles in snowfall is better than looking out of a car's windshield. It looks like the snowflakes are coming right at you! You get that whole 3-D thing. But as I get older, I realize that riding in snow should be reserved for those caught in it unexpectedly. Should the flakes catch you by surprise, make sure you do a couple of things:

- Slow down! Snow's slippery stuff, and if ice is forming under it, you're running a very real risk of going down.
- Park it if you can. Snowfall here in England doesn't last long, and it's better to wait out a bit of snowfall than to marvel at how fast it melted from the view in your hospital room.

Despite the changing meteorological conditions that we call weather in England, riding here can be a completely safe and fun experience. Being AWARE of what's

happening around you, and adjusting your riding style accordingly, will

avoid being forcibly relocated into the opposing lane of traffic. Lesson learned: even the smallest objects can have a dramatic effect on your bike's handling, and they don't have to be in the road to do it.

Snow time for a ride. Having grown up in Central California near the beach, I was deprived as a child of the basic human right to play in the snow. It's easy to spot a person who has lived in California: They're the folks out playing in the one-quarter inch of snow that fell the night before, while everyone else is inside staying warm. Spotting a Native Californian is even easier: He's the guy riding his motorcycle in the snow. Probably riding to the store to stock up on bottled water and bread so he won't die of thirst or hunger before the snow melts tomorrow. I love to ride in the snow. I'm not completely sure why.

play a major role in the success or failure of your next trip on two wheels. The possibility of bad weather should never keep us from riding (within reason). It should, however, make us stop and think before we throw our leg across the seat. Are there times when the weather is too bad to ride in? Most definitely. When are those times? That depends on your experience level, what you're riding, and how far and long you're going.

By using some judiciously applied operational risk management, you can decide whether to take the bike or leave it at home. Make sure you decide wisely. Don't forget the basic rule of all things recreational: if you're in doubt; **DON'T DO IT!**

Another beautiful summer of motorcycle riding is almost upon us. Ride safe, ride smart, and we'll see you on the street. ■




MSGT SCOTT C. LEWIS
314 OSS/DOP
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Im a 42-year-old military member who has been riding motorcycles since I was 18. I feel very comfortable riding bikes, and to tell the truth, have been quite annoyed by all the attention and emphasis given to motorcycle riding the last couple of years. I've always felt that luck, not training or experience, was the deciding factor with most motorcycle accidents. I enjoy riding enough that I'm willing to attend these seemingly never-ending meetings and training classes that the Air Force is constantly putting together.

So, with this attitude, I attended a class about a year ago that our base safety staff had put together. The instructor was a Little Rock motor-

cycle police officer with more than 23 years of experience. It turned out to be a very interesting class, with lots of helpful tips for beginners as well as experienced riders. One of the things they talked about was how lots of riders pull up to an intersection, take the bike out of gear, and use that time to relax, which I have to admit I'm guilty of doing. He told how lots of accidents he had worked involved the biker parked in just such a situation getting plowed over by someone from the side or behind.

I was so intrigued that I actually spoke to some friends who also ride, and one of them related a story to me that he had avoided just such an accident when a truck failed to stop and smashed into the car in front of him. He said that while at a standstill on the freeway, he noticed in his rearview



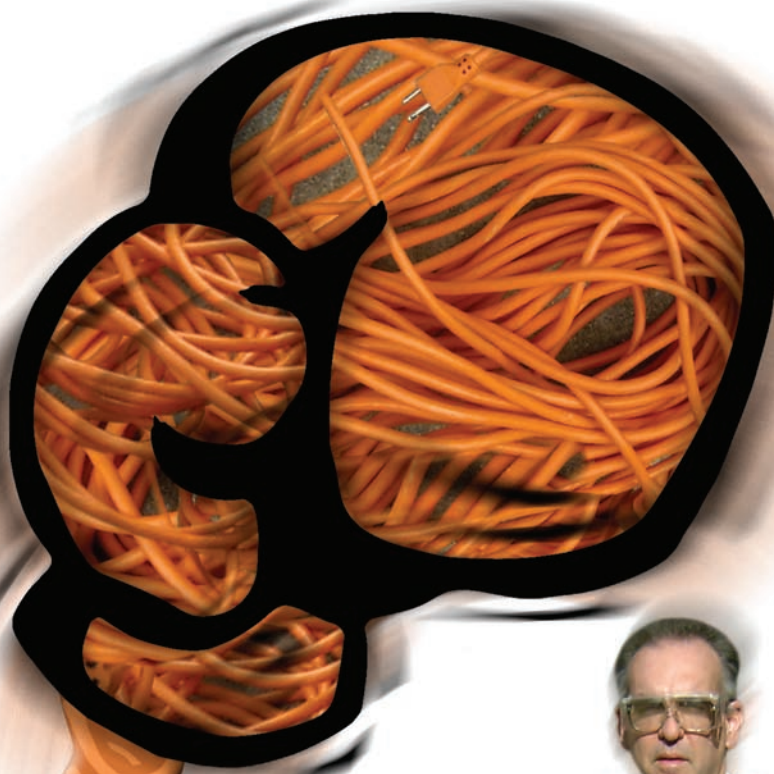
mirror a truck was approaching at high speed. When the truck didn't slow down, he headed for the median just as the truck struck the car he had been parked behind. He said this no doubt saved his life. I decided to make an effort to follow this good advice and remain vigilant even when stopped at a red light or stop sign.

A year later, I'm riding my bike home on a beautiful Friday afternoon. I take my normal exit and pull up behind a big ol' work truck with a very large heavy-duty bumper. I start to relax a little and then remember I should check my rear-view to see what's coming up behind me. After a few moments, I see a nice-looking maroon car coming off the ramp at high speed. I kept watching, thinking he would slow down, but he never did. I decided to pull over to the side a little, just in case he was unable to stop. As I'm pulling over, I see a flash in my mirrors as the car slams into the truck I was parked behind, missing me by a few inches. Glass and debris from the car flew everywhere, including past my bike. After collecting my thoughts, I parked my bike and checked to see if anyone was hurt, which, thank

God, no one was.

Later, one of the witnesses summed it up best when he told the state trooper that the guy in the car had almost killed me. Had I not been looking in my rear view, I would have been crushed between those two vehicles. I'll go a step farther and say that had I not attended that mandatory training a year earlier, I would have died October 3, 2003.

I now look forward to any future motorcycle training the Air Force asks (or tells) me to attend. You're never too old to learn something new. The consequences of not learning could be you will never get any older. My thanks to the LRAFB motorcycle safety staff for putting together the training that saved my life. ■



The Cordmaster

JAMES D. LEACH
AFRL/HEDM
Brooks City-Base TX

Pull hard on that cord ... and you might just find out what can happen!

I have always read in the manuals not to pull on the cord when disconnecting an electrical device. Why? It may cause damage to the cord. It may damage the outlet,

creating a shock/fire hazard. Both are good reasons to disconnect by grasping and pulling the plug. Last summer, I discovered another, literally by accident.

After experiencing back problems, I looked to reduce the causes. Some stretching exercises helped immensely. However, I was still prone to back spasms, especially when working in the yard. To lighten the load on my back, I bought an electric lawn mower that ran on an extension

cord. This eliminated a lot of the weight I had been pushing before. It took a while to learn to handle, avoiding the obvious tripping hazard by keeping enough slack in the cord and setting a proper mowing pattern. Unless the lawn had gotten thick or tall, I could usually push it with just one hand, leaving my other hand free to adjust the cord as I went. In no time, I was skilled at manipulating the cord.

To reach the far end of the backyard, I needed two cords to reach the full distance. I replaced the cut cord with a new orange cord that was better rounded. However, I was still using a flat yellow extension cord I'd had for many years. While mowing one day, I felt a tingling sensation when I came in contact with the yellow one. I stopped to take a look and saw many tiny cracks along the cord. I continued, but was apprehensive. Whether it was real or imagination, I felt like I was getting a buzz of the electrical variety. I thought how this would make for a good article—"How I Electrocuted Myself." Of course, if I did not survive, it would be written posthumously—by someone else. Time to replace the yellow cord. That was one story that could wait.

Finally, I had two new cords suitable for outdoor use. "I am certainly safe now," I said. However, I failed to realize that I had developed some bad habits. Once any activity becomes routine, it's all too easy to slip into an unsafe practice without realizing it. As I had. While winding up the cord, when I got to the last 15 feet or so, I would just give a little tug and pop it out of the outlet. I knew I shouldn't, but with no consequences, this habit was reinforced. It also eliminated bending over, which risked back injury. "Accept the unknown risk," was my answer.

Of course, handling extension cords can have its own frustrations. What got me into trouble was my impatience with getting all the kinks and knots out. It never ceased to amaze me how a cord that I had carefully wrapped would knot up the next time I went to use it.

Now equipped with my new cords, I had been mowing for about 15 minutes when I had to stop, as the cord had knotted up and I could not go any farther. It was a warm, humid morning and it wasn't going to get any better. Delays meant more time in the humidity. I looked at the cord and began to pull on

it, hoping it was a kink that would work itself loose. As the frustration mounted, I ended up giving it a hard yank.

The next thing I knew, I felt and heard a big WHACK!, right in the middle of my forehead. It felt like I had been hit by a rock. It happened so fast I never saw anything. As I pulled, I had disconnected the two cords and the loose plug came flying at me with bullet-like speed. It was hard to imagine how something that was made of molded rubber and looked so benign could hit with such force. I was stunned, to say the least, but was still standing.

After the pain subsided some, I checked my forehead with my hand. Yes, I was definitely bleeding a little. I decided it wasn't serious, and adjusted my headband to cover the wound and stop the bleeding. Then I untangled the extension cord with the kind of patience I should have had in the first place, and pressed onward.

I did not want to look until I was finished.

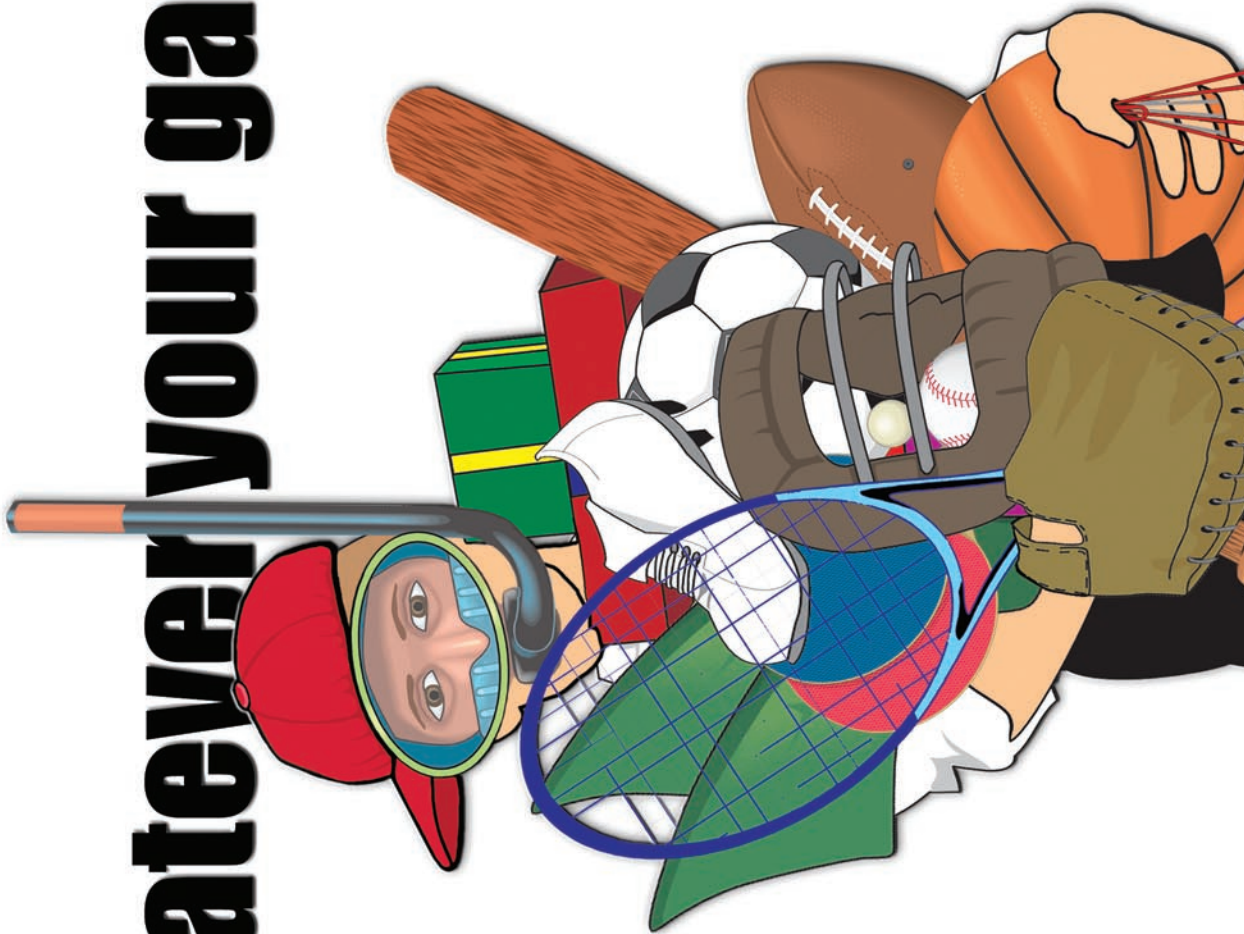
Afterward, I went inside and took a good look. I was lucky. There on my upper forehead was a vertical cut about 1-1/4 inch long. It wasn't deep or wide, so I didn't need stitches. After I showered, the cut was bleeding slightly, so I cleaned it up and put on some ointment. Later, I had time for reflection. What if I had been struck in the mouth? Or even worse, what if I had not been wearing any eye protection ... ?

Now, for some advice from your Cord Master:

- I highly recommend using electric lawnmowers. They operate with little noise and are environmentally friendly. Some communities offer rebate programs for exchanging your gasoline mower for an electric one. If you don't like the idea of using one with an extension cord, there are battery-powered models.
- When using outdoor extension cords, periodically check for cracks and other signs of wear or damage.
- Before using extension cords, take the time to unravel any kinks or knots that are likely to develop. Using a cord reel may also help.
- Always wear appropriate personal protective equipment when working outdoors—safety glasses, safety boots and other gear appropriate for your project.

If you follow these tips and remember my experience, you won't be pulling on any cords! ■

Whatever your game ...





Play it safe!

Digital Illustration by Felicia Moreland
Produced by HQ AFSC Media Branch
<http://afsafety.af.mil./AFSC/posters/postermenu.htm>





FRANK KELLEY
HQ AFSC/SEGT

I've been a safety professional with the Air Force for 35 years. I've had a career in the military and continued as a civil servant. I've worked safety during the horrors of war in Vietnam, the Gulf War, 9/11 and even in peacetime, I've worked safety during the horrors that people do to themselves. Yet, the hardest thing in safety I've ever had to do was to investigate fatal mishaps.

In all the fatal mishaps I've been involved with, and there have been many, the most common thread was the deceased person's loss of situational awareness.

Situational awareness is so much more than watching out for other traffic on the road, or knowing how much alcohol you've had. It's all about your life! When life's stresses begin to pile up and become more than people can cope

with, they start taking risks to find relief.

We've all had such times—high Ops Tempos that create pressure to get the job done quickly, or trying to meet the demands of the job with limited resources. Moreover, who has not busted the speed limit to get home a few minutes earlier? The risks run from damaged equipment to loss of life in a mishap, or even the extreme of suicide by automobile. There have been cases where individuals have felt life was so bad that they ended their lives via auto mishaps—in one case, an operator intentionally drove his car head-on into a semi.

However, let's look at the bigger picture, beyond work. Let's talk about home and health. In today's fast-paced lifestyles, easy credit and rising health care costs can overwhelm us. Sure, you may have health insurance to cover the cost, but we're all deeply concerned when a loved one is ill. Moreover, when things on the home front are not right, it affects



the way we do our jobs.

OK, situational awareness covers everything in life, so what is my point? Most people never understand the importance of situational awareness, even professionals!

I've investigated many fatal mishaps. I'm going to tell you about one that will prove the point. It involves a motorcycle operator, the realities of life, and the failure to focus on situational awareness.

One evening, I received notification about a young man involved in a fatal traffic mishap. I responded to the scene, to discover that he had ridden his motorcycle into the side of a hill. Witnesses and the police report showed that he had attempted to pass another vehicle in a no-passing zone, and that while passing, to avoid being hit an oncoming car, the Airman drove onto the shoulder. There was more than ample room on the shoulder for him to stop, but apparently, he chose to ride the shoulder past the oncoming car and try to re-engage the road a bit farther down. Unfortunately, the shoulder ended in the side of a

hill, which resulted in his death.

Had he lost situational awareness? It appeared so for the moment, at least until I started my investigation. As I looked into his background, I discovered that he was having serious problems at work, had separated from his wife, his marriage was on the rocks, he was deep in financial debt and had a sick daughter who required constant medical attention. Talk about loss of situational awareness—his life seemed to be full of it!

The more I looked, the more it seemed that he was on a suicide run. Then I started finding evidence that he was fully aware of his problems and was working to resolve them. On his own, he had sought the help of his commander and first sergeant. He put everything on the table and they were working with him fully. I've known commanders who were willing to go out on a limb for their people, but this commander had gone out to the edge of the leaf, and then some.

The results were that his debts were starting

to come down, and his marriage, though still shaky, appeared to be on the mend. His daughter was getting the medical help she needed, and his efforts at work were improving because he was seeing light at the end of the tunnel that wasn't a train.

He was not a suicide—quite the opposite! He had positive situational awareness. So, what went wrong?

On the day of the mishap, knowing that things were finally looking up, he spent the day with a friend, riding motorcycles, hitting golf balls and having a barbecue. Of course, at the barbecue they downed a few beers, but nothing in excess.

Then, about 20 minutes before the mishap, he decided to take a ride down by the lake. This is when he gave up paying attention to his situational awareness. He had been active all day and didn't feel the effects of the alcohol he had consumed.

When he got on his motorcycle he wasn't drunk. However, there was enough alcohol in his system that, during the 20-minute ride from his friend's house to the mishap scene, his inactivity permitted the alcohol to have a much greater effect.

As he approached the back of a car heading uphill, he was clearly exceeding the posted 35-mph speed limit. He ignored the "Do Not Pass" sign, and tried to go around the car on a curve. As he pulled alongside the vehicle he was passing, he saw the oncoming car rounding the curve. Unable to get back in his own lane, he took the only escape route available to him—the left shoulder. He should have stopped then.

However, the alcohol apparently impaired his judgment, because he had not attempted to stop, but rather tried to ride the shoulder through the curve to get back on the road. Alas, the shoulder ran out, and without warning, caused him to run head-on into the side of the hill, resulting in his death.

Had he lost his situational awareness? No, he had a clear understanding of his life and his surroundings. Though he was not drunk, legally, when he went for his ride, the alcohol he had consumed influenced him.

Had he let his guard down? Yes! He was relaxing from the pressures of life and in doing so, failed to keep focused on his situational awareness.

An old saying goes, "The time to look out is when things look up." In this case, he failed to look out as things started to look up. ■

W. J. DEARING
11CS/SCUT
Bolling AFB DC



**Bill's
(not Ted's)
Bad Adventure**

What you're about to read will sound like an impossible adventure, but it really happened to me. I hope it doesn't happen to you.

In the summer of 2003, I bought a well-maintained, classic 1979 Honda Goldwing motorcycle. I arranged to pick up the bike in the fall.

Before I could get it, I was diagnosed with

a form of throat cancer, and had to undergo medical treatment. Naturally, this delayed me from picking up the motorcycle.

After the treatment, and with the approval of my doctors, I agreed to pick up the bike in the spring. I had spent the winter going through medical hell, and was ready for an adventure. I was truly

looking forward to riding my new cycle.

Through the required state inspection, I learned that the bike needed some minor work. Then, after I retrieved the motorcycle from the shop, it was time for a test ride. I wanted to take my new motorcycle on a road trip the next weekend, so I had to make sure the bike and I were ready.

For my shakedown cruise, I decided to take a two-hour ride toward the mountains. I sped away from my house, taking the back roads to avoid some traffic. I headed toward a familiar road—a nice two-lane highway with little traffic. I chose this road because it runs parallel with a main four-lane interstate highway, and if the weather or time became a problem, I could take the interstate home.

About six miles down the road, disaster struck. While I was negotiating a curve, the bike and I went off the road. The bike hit and bent a steel pipe that was imbedded into the ground, broke off a lightweight signpost, and ended up in a ditch. I believe the impact bent the fork, causing me to flip over the bike and hit a wooden fence.

After a passerby noticed me and called for help, the police evacuated me by helicopter to the emergency room. I was in intensive care for 11 days, drifting in and out of consciousness for six days.

My helmet was cracked in two places. A small piece of the helmet over the right ear was broken off. There was another crack on the right side. The outside of the helmet separated from the inside molded foam, and the foam stayed on my head.

I ended up in pretty bad shape, too. Besides the normal bumps and bruises, I also cut my right ear in two places; one part of my ear was nearly cut off. The worst injury was that two vertebrae in my neck had been cracked, apparently the result of hitting the fence.

My recovery was difficult. Once again, I was going to be on medical leave from work—this time for three months. I had to spend six weeks in a fixed neck brace, which would not allow me to move my head. I had to sleep and take a shower with this brace on! Six weeks without being able to wash my hair was enough to drive a sane man crazy. A follow-up exam by the orthopedist resulted in changing to a soft brace

for six more weeks.

By this time I was ready to climb the walls. I had spent the last six months of my life, due to cancer treatments, only being able to read books and watch television. Now I was back in the same situation.

Because I was having trouble using my left arm, I had to receive physical therapy. The doctors thought I had suffered some additional internal damage, but it turned out to be merely bruised muscles. After three months of rehab, I was finally allowed to drive and go back to work. Work never looked so inviting.

The doctors have since given me the green light on my progress. Problems with my left arm persist, although they tell me these problems will subside as the muscles heal.

What have I gained from this adventure?

I've been riding and building motorcycles for 40 years, and I think of myself as a safe rider. However, after this recent experience, I've decided to "hang up my motorcycle spurs."

The motorcycle is now in sad condition. The front fork and the handle bar are beyond repair. All the cargo containers were damaged. The motorcycle is repairable, but at what cost? In my yard is what remains of a classic 1979 Honda Goldwing motorcycle, which I would be more than happy to sell.

On a positive note, I do plan to "get back on the horse that threw me." I'll keep my license and ride again, but I doubt that I will ever own another motorcycle.

A friend in the medical profession informed me that memory loss of up to 30 minutes before an accident is common after a head injury. To this day, I cannot recall anything that happened after I turned onto the road. I don't even remember the traffic light between where I turned onto the road and the accident site.

I've since returned to work and I'm trying to move past this accident. It is uncertain if I will ever remember the details of the accident. Only time will tell. For now, I would prefer to forget that this "adventure" ever happened! ■

Editor's note: The author reported that he recently did "get back on the horse that threw him," and rode a friend's motorcycle without incident.

Springtime Safety

1ST LT TONY WICKMAN
ALCOM/JO2PA
ELMENDORF AFB AK

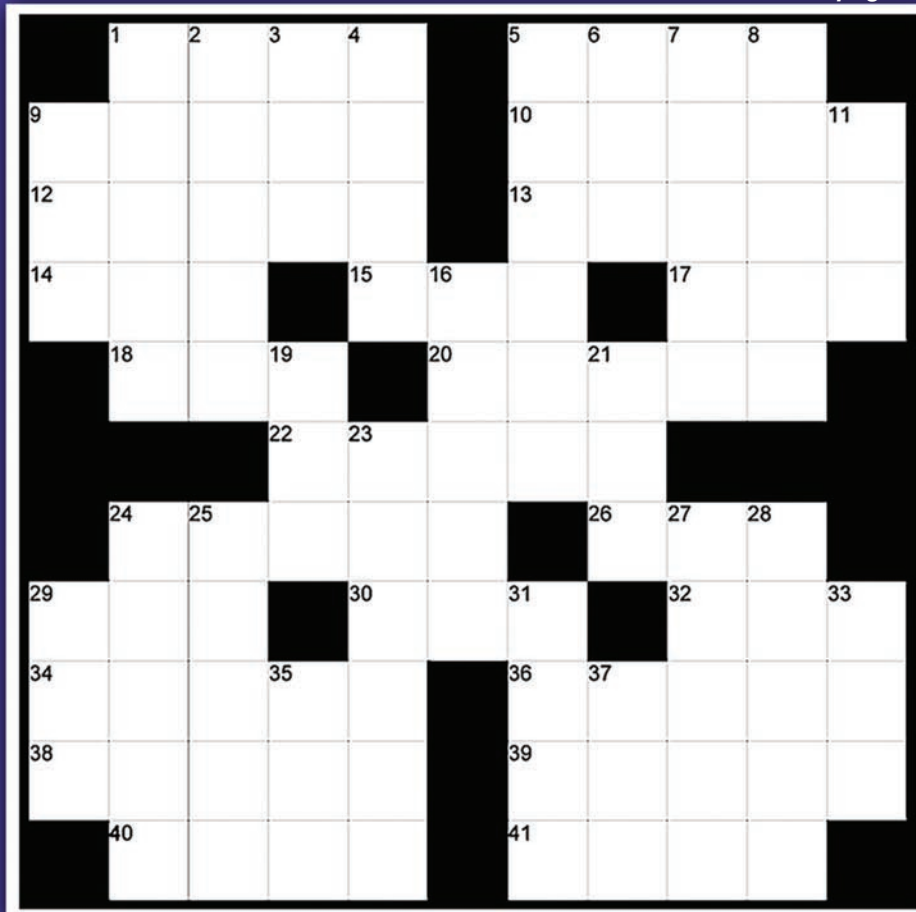
ACROSS

1. Steel-toe safety item for industrial areas
5. USAF Housing safety concern
9. CO2 or CO detectors
10. Glue type
12. Jeans fabric
13. Remaining this keeps DUIs away
14. Lair
15. Perform
17. Places injured people go
18. Golf score
20. Burgle
22. Sour, bitter-tasting
24. Lamenting moans
26. Aerobics safety flooring
29. Actor Affleck
30. Cleopatra killer
32. ___ Lanka
34. San Diego NFL team nickname
36. Soothed
38. Liquid measurement for fluid intake
39. Safety item for car windows
40. Singer Lovett
41. Mentions

DOWN

1. Recurring physical need, to focus
2. TV naturalist Jack
3. USAF inspection
4. Jane Austen novel
5. Addams Family uncle
6. Company's first stock sale
7. Kimonos
8. Strenuous effort
9. Compute
11. Several 365 days, in short
16. Thinking game
19. Dust or wash
21. Deep Blue manufacturer
23. Modest, pure
24. Korean capital
25. Decorative woodwork
27. Estimate
28. Hair curl
29. Outdoor cooking
31. Dowels
33. USAF common access cards
35. MTV show
37. State home to Maxwell AFB

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Bumbles Fumbles & Stumbles

isn't it? Helmet on, and away we go! To climb a hill, he stands on the pedals and leans forward. That's when he discovers that hand-tight is *not* good enough. The resulting one-and-a-half gainer over the handlebars leaves him with a concussion, cuts and bruises.

Break Dancing

Dancing Dude was shimmying across a very crowded dance floor, toward the back of the room. Then another not-so-tiny dancer stumbled and stepped on DD's foot, causing him to fall. Because of not-so-tiny's weight on his foot, DD twisted his leg, and felt extreme pain. The ER docs diagnosed a fractured fibula. A few days later, Hopping Hombre (the artist formerly known as "Dancing Dude") went into the hospital for surgery, then enjoyed some convalescent leave.



Brush Pile: Burn Or Bag?

This fellow had raked and gathered a 6-by-6-foot pile of brush. Then, he faced a momentous choice: burn the pile or bag it? I think you know where we're going. Showing some foresight, he dug a trench around the brush pile and filled it with water to control the burn. He ignited the brush with a match, but noticed some of the material was not burning to his satisfaction. Naturally, then, he poured gasoline on the pile to fully ignite the brush. Unfortunately, he failed to notice that he had accidentally spilled some gas on his right hand and forearm. The stream ignited and flamed up to his hand and forearm, causing first- and second-degree burns.



Nice Kitty

A customer at the base Veterinary Clinic asks the receptionist to bring in her cat from the car. The clinic policy is that only the docs and techs may handle patients, but she wants to help. "Do I really need to wear those mandatory elbow-length leather gloves? After all, Fluffy's in a cage, so what could possibly happen?" Fluffy knows. CHOMP! Bit her right though the cage. Later, the bitee went to a nearby military hospital, where the docs treated her damaged digit and put her on quarters for five days.



ATV Shiatsu

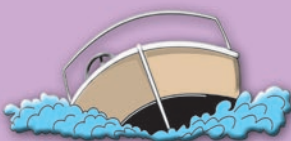
A guy was camping with some buds at a state park over a holiday weekend. Two folks had brought ATVs, and they gave him a basic orientation to operating the vehicle. The next morning, the four riders don their PPE and ride over to the



The following short articles are derived from actual Air Force Class C mishaps. Our intent is not to make light of anyone's pain, even if it is sometimes self-inflicted; it's the questionable decisions and behavior we're pointing out. This is just a different approach to getting people to read about safety. Check 'em out—you just might get a laugh, and learn something, too.

Bad Night For Beer And A Boat Ride

Just sit right back and read a tale—a tale of a fateful trip that started with a case of beer and a tiny ship. The mate was a slightly tipsy man, the skipper had drunk his share; they set out with three passengers and gave them all a scare. The captain turned sharp to port, the tiny ship was tossed; if only they'd had seats for five, maybe their night wouldn't be lost. The extra two slid off the deck of their overloaded ship; the one who couldn't swim was in for a nasty trip. So, this is the tale of our mishap crew, the imbibing five; they'll have to get their injured mate to the hospital, to keep the guy alive. A passerby and a game warden do their part to transport him there for care; he's hurt, but lucky to be dry and breathing air. No life jackets, no common sense, not a single sober man; getting banged up in a mishap, it's as painful as he can stand. So, join us here next quarter my friend, you're sure to get a smile; from other bumbling boaters, or drivers with a high-risk style.

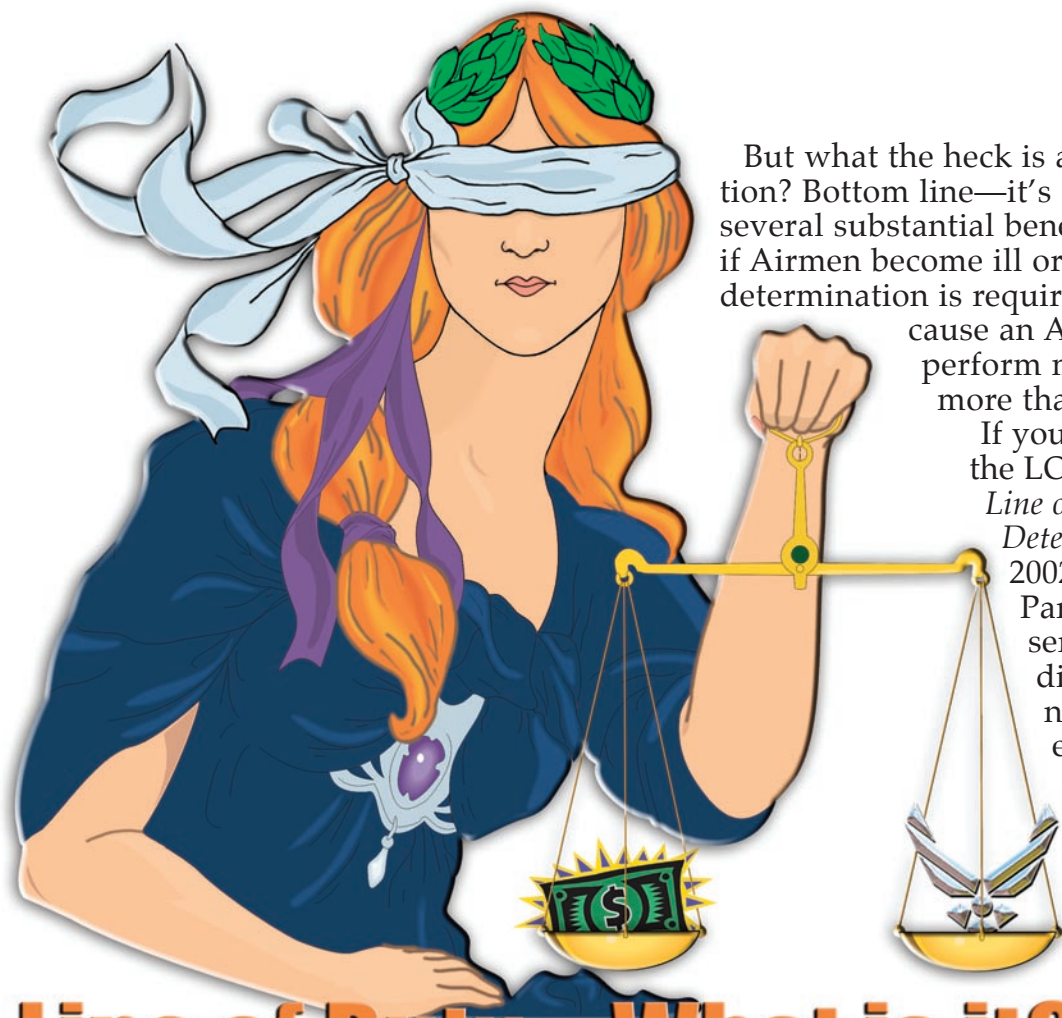


Moving Violation

Just after a PCS, Cy the Cycle Guy wants to go out for a bike ride in the new neighborhood. He reinstalls the bike's pedals, after the movers had taken them off. Hand-tight is good enough,



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But what the heck is an LOD determination? Bottom line—it's a decision whether several substantial benefits will be available if Airmen become ill or are injured. An LOD determination is required when injuries cause an Airman's inability to perform military duties for more than 24 hours.

If you want to know about the LOD, read AFI 36-2910, *Line of Duty (Misconduct) Determination*, 4 October 2002, for the story.

Paragraph 1.1 states, "A service member who dies or sustains an illness, injury, or disease either while absent from duty or due to his or her own misconduct, stands to lose substantial government benefits ... [t]he LOD determination protects the interests of both the member and the United

States Government." Active-duty members, ARC members (on published orders, inactive duty, or traveling directly to or from duty), Academy cadets, and ROTC cadets performing military training are all subject to LOD determinations. The facts in each case are critical. The instruction lays it out.

Turn to paragraph 1.2. Several benefits can be affected by LOD determinations, including disability retirement and severance pay, normal pay, the term of enlistment, veteran's benefits, and survivor benefits. A member's entitlement to disability compensation from the Air Force may be lost or reduced if the disability occurred during a period of unauthorized absence or resulted from the member's own misconduct. And a member may not be entitled to pay if he or she was absent from regular duties for a continuous period of more than one day because of injury or disease that was directly caused by or immediately follows his or her intemper-

Line of Duty ... What is it?

GEORGE CLARK
HQ AFSC/JA

Line of duty (LOD) is one of those terms many Airmen think they understand, but don't. As safety professionals, you need to know the facts about LOD determinations and the impact they can have on Airmen.

Commanders and their safety advisors often brainstorm prevention tools, and it's not uncommon for LOD determinations to be the subject. These experienced Airmen sometimes arrive at interesting, if misinformed, conclusions—"Airmen would think twice if they had to pay for their own medical care." Perhaps you'd be well served to involve your servicing legal office in these brainstorming sessions.

ate use of drugs or alcohol. In other words, a determination that a member's injury during a DUI mishap was sustained due to his or her intentional misconduct or willful neglect may lead to lost disability compensation or pay, and could extend an enlisted member's time in service [talk to your JAG about those legal words]. It is just not worth the gamble. Referring to the misconception discussed earlier, note that paragraph 1.3.2 states an adverse LOD determination does not authorize the United States to recoup the cost of medical care from an active-duty member. But clearly an adverse LOD determination can have a significant impact.

Before brainstorming with the commander regarding private motor vehicle mishaps, be sure to read paragraph A5.6, Motor Vehicle Accidents. Every subparagraph has useful information on mishaps involving voluntary intoxication, the use of drugs, falling asleep, and using safety belts or helmets.

There is no cookie-cutter approach to this important process. Every mishap involves unique facts, and a substantial part of the LOD instruction describes an administrative process that helps ensure Airmen get a fair hearing. There is, for example, a presumption that an injury to an Airman in an active-duty or inactive-duty for training (IDT) status is in the line of duty. That being said, I'd hate to be the 20-year-old Airman who drank several beers and, despite his friends' warnings, got on a motorcycle without a helmet or any other safety gear, or a driver's license, and was clocked at 70 in a 25 zone before the mishap that spared his life, but led to a lengthy hospital stay. Those facts aren't encouraging, and if the LOD determination is unfavorable, the Airman's family could also suffer the consequences.

Try to give this topic some life if it's discussed at safety meetings. Face it; most Airmen do not often think of disability retirement and severance pay, veterans' or survivors' benefits. It might help to include training on the benefits available after serious injuries, and which ones an adverse LOD determination can affect. Get the facts—read the instruction—talk with your JAG. ■

bunny sand dunes for practice. Then the new rider decided to try the big dunes. Cresting the 15-footer was fun, and so was sailing over the handlebars ... but then he landed in a heap and the ATV rolled on top of him. After one of his buds pulled the beast off of him, he was able to mount up and ride back to camp. The hurtin' unit's pals insisted he go to the doc, who diagnosed a compression fracture of six vertebrae. Results: overnight stay in the hospital, then nine days on quarters.

Soft Ball?

Slugger McSwifty sped from first base to second, where his noggin and the batter's line drive merged. No quitter, he shook it off and played the rest of the game. Later, the bad headache, dizziness and blurry vision convinced him to visit the hospital. The docs diagnosed a concussion and gave him two days on quarters.



Soft Ball? Part II

At softball practice, the right fielder goes to catch a line drive, and does—with his face. Broken bones and severe cuts ensue.

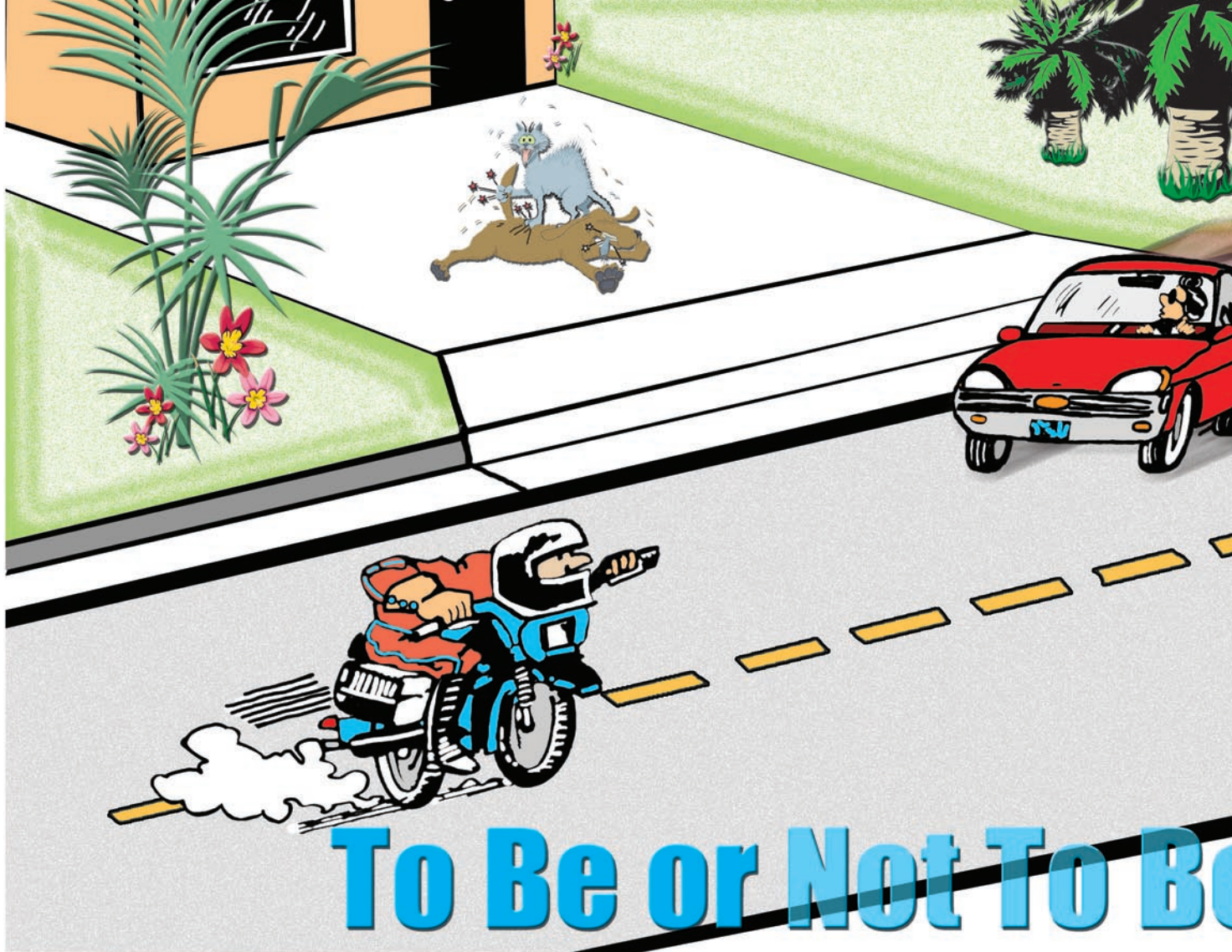
Grasshopper ... On One Leg

There he was, decked out in the right PPE, warming up for a Tae Kwon Do training session. Landing after a jump kick, he feels his leg buckle. At the hospital, the docs diagnose a spiral fracture of the lower leg. ■



Spring Safety answers to page 22





SMSGT LOU FIELDS
48 MUNS/MXWR
RAF Lakenheath

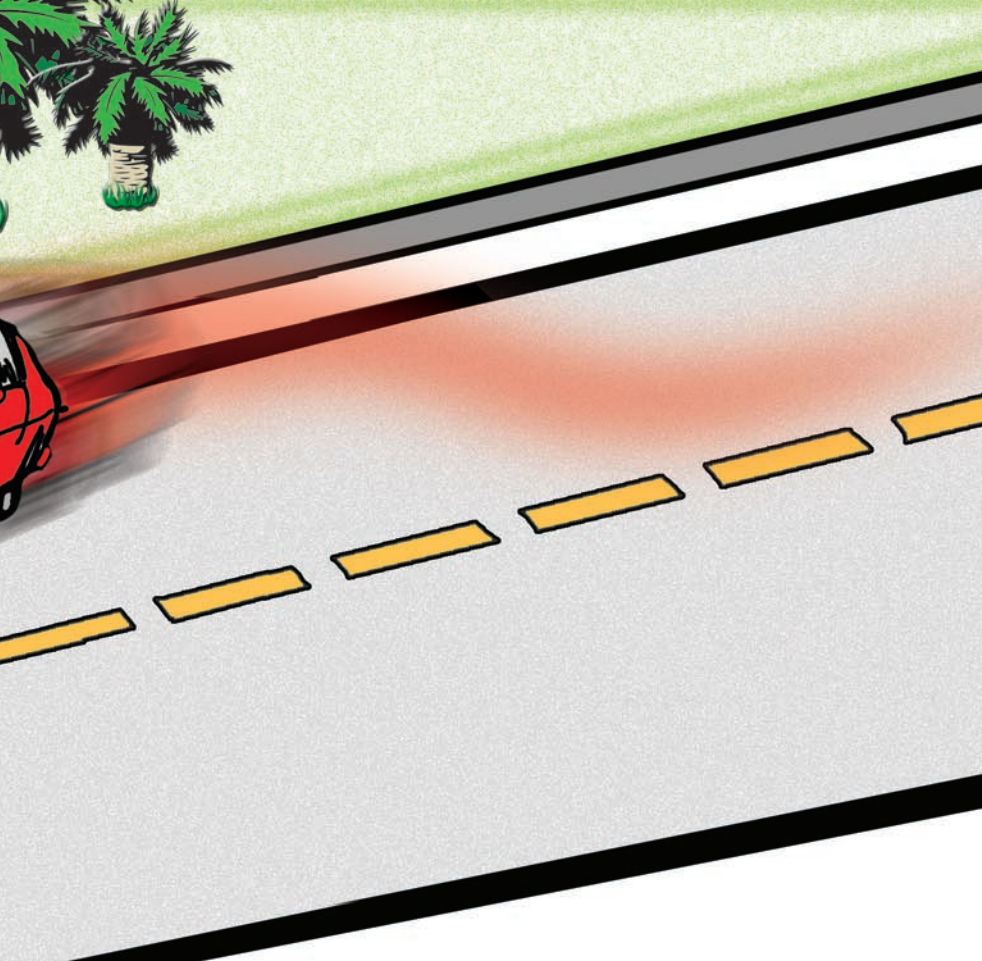
It was a typical Florida afternoon—a few clouds to keep the temperature hovering at a cool 92 degrees, no rain in sight, and the retirees hadn't hit the roads yet. I still had a few hours to go before I had to get to work, so I decided to take my bike out to meet a friend for lunch.

I gathered up my standard safety gear—safety glasses, full-face helmet (believe me, you don't want to find your head or any part of your skin on a chunk of hot Florida asphalt!), long-sleeve shirt (this was Florida, after all), pants, boots, and my favorite full-fingered gloves—and headed out to my bike. Of course, there was no way I was going to forget the nice bright-orange vest that we had to wear!

I always thought it was overkill to wear those things—I believed the reflective belts should provide enough visibility. After all, I never had any problem seeing anyone at night while out on the flightline—they were like lighthouses calling out, “Look at me, look at me!” Besides, I always thought the vest just seemed a little uncool when cruising on my bike. But before the day was out, I would find out that even a vest isn't necessarily enough.

I did the standard T-CLOCS (Tires/wheels, Controls, Lights, Oils/lubricants, Chassis, Side-stand) pre-ride inspection on my bike, and prepared to mount up for an enjoyable cruise and some good seafood. The ride out was fantastic, and with my visor up, the appetizer of small Florida insects I had was just enough to tide me over until I could get some lunch.

After lunch, I decided to stay off the



e Seen

main roads as the traffic started to pick up (those retirees scare me when they are out in force!). I left the restaurant parking lot, signaling and checking my path ahead was clear, and constantly scanning for potential problem areas and possible escape routes, if something were to pop up. I had turned right onto the highway for a short distance until I could turn down one of the little neighborhood side streets that would let me cruise at a relaxing 30 mph, feeling the warmth of the sun, and enjoying the breeze as it cooled me along the way.

I noticed my street was coming up and signaled, performing all checks required as I turned onto the street. I began assessing the road ahead for any potential dangers: pedestrians, cars, kick balls, and the odd ice cream truck being chased by dogs and kids. The road was clear for at least 300 yards; no one out in their yards, no oncoming traf-

fic, no crossroads to worry about, just a nice, quiet ride down a nice, quiet street.

About 100 yards down the road, I saw a single car approaching my direction. I could tell it was a small hatchback, with only a driver in it. As the car approached, I noticed it started to swerve past the center of the street. I briefly wondered if the driver had seen something on the side of the road that I had missed. I checked intently to ensure the driver was not signaling a turn into a driveway or anything, and not seeing a turn signal, I then checked to see if the driver saw me. I saw her eyes looking right at me and I thought, "she must see me, she is looking straight at me." Since I believed she wasn't turning left in front of me, and as far as I could tell she saw me, I had to figure she saw something in the road that she needed

to steer around, so I began to swerve to the right to give her more clearance. Then, at the last minute, she turned right in front of me, causing an immense surge of adrenaline throughout my body. I quickly realized I could not avoid a collision; there was no time and nowhere to go in the literal seconds before impact. I tried to identify and employ an escape route, to no avail. As she turned left in front of me, I steered to the left, praying that I might squeak past the back of her car.

I felt the impact before I heard anything. My front tire explosively collided with the right rear side of her car. I quickly found out that a car is an immovable object for a motorcycle. My bike stopped quick and hard as it crushed itself into the unrelenting metal, and with no seatbelt or airbag to protect me, my body did what the laws of nature told it to

continued on next page

do—it continued forward at about 30 mph.

As I became increasingly aware of the proximity of my head to the car, I made one last effort to avoid any permanent or life-ending injuries; I arched my back and tried to lift myself above the steel kiss the car was offering. As it happens in the movies, it seemed to happen for me; at that moment, everything seemed to slow down. I managed to avoid the side of the car with most of my body, but my right arm (I'm left handed, of course!) decided to lag behind and see if the nice person had her window down—she didn't. Once my arm was done visiting her window, it decided to join the rest of my body over the back of her car. I then rolled off the other side and did a nice tumbling routine (I'm sure I would have at least secured a position on the Olympic team) for about 20 yards down the street, where I came to rest on my back.

Just when I thought I might have a moment to relax and assess my situation, I had a screaming lady running at me, yelling, "Oh my God, I killed you, I killed you!" I raised my head up off the ground and began asking her very politely "What the H--- were you thinking? Didn't you see me? You turned right in front of me, and never even signaled!" It was about this time that she saw the blood running from my arm and went off screaming again. Since she was of no help, I knocked on a nearby door and asked if they might call the police. After seeing my arm, they decided it might be wise to call an ambulance, as well. I then went back to the car to see what was left of my bike. The front tire was making a permanent left turn and the handlebars just didn't look like handlebars anymore.

After the cops showed up and got everyone's information, they told me the driver said that she never even saw me. My mouth dropped open as I told the cops that I saw her eyes staring straight at me! After a brief but painful trip to the emergency room where I and the medics (okay, mostly me) learned about the very long and painful process of picking glass out of multiple cuts, I got the word on my bike, and of course it was a total loss. The insurance company said I was lucky only the bike was totaled.

I then spent the next several days trying to figure out what I might have done wrong, or how I could have reacted better. Could I have avoided it? Could I have been safer? Should I have even been out on the bike?

I reviewed the riding conditions: clear day, dry roads, and fair temperature. Was that a factor? I didn't think so. I then reviewed my mental condition: Was I tired, was my mind somewhere else? No. I then reviewed my bike's condition: was it mechanically sound, lights working, brakes? Yes. Could I have avoided the accident? That's a tough one. I did all the right things as a rider, but other environmental factors beyond my control played a strong part. My biggest question--did I learn anything? YES!

As motorcycle riders, we are taught that if we pay attention to the road hazards and conditions, we can stay relatively safe. Does that give us a false sense of security? Maybe. We think that because we are performing safe operations that we will stay safe, but as I learned, not all the environmental factors are in our control. The biggest thing that had an impact on me that day was that despite it being broad daylight, not raining, dry roads, headlight and reflective vest on, and I seeing the other driver's eyes looking at me: **SHE NEVER SAW ME.**

What did I take away from that day? You can't control the world, only a part of it, and you can't eliminate risk, only minimize it. Just as we learn strategies to cope with problems and situations in our lives, we must learn the riding strategies that we can use to minimize the amount of risk we are exposed to when we choose to ride.

As bikers, we inherently assume a greater personal risk every time we ride. Our best defense is to have a good offense. Be mentally prepared to ride, make sure you are physically prepared, and make sure your bike is ready. Know your limits and the bike's limits. Know the laws and the environment you're riding in, and constantly review your riding strategies. You can never be too safe on a bike.

Last but not least, you can never have a bright enough reflective vest, **ALWAYS** wear protective gear, and never assume that the other person is aware of you or your intentions (even if you see them looking at you!). ■



SAFETY RESEARCH UPDATE

The following information is courtesy of SafetyLit, a service of the San Diego State University Graduate School of Public Health. SafetyLit summarizes copyrighted reports on safety research. SafetyLit staff and volunteers regularly examine more than 300 journals and scores of reports from government agencies and organizations. We've included these summaries in *Road & Rec* for their interest to the Air Force community. For more, go to this link: www.safetylit.org.

The Eyes Have It

Eye doctors in Australia and other countries have treated patients who required surgery after mistaking their cosmetic nail adhesive for eye drops. The bottles for the two products are remarkably similar, with no significant difference in size, color or feel. Users often keep both items together in a cosmetics area of the bathroom.

(Source: *Med J Aust* 2004; 181(6): 341. Copyright 2004, Australian Medical Association.)

Breaking Up: Emotional And Physical Impact

French researchers discovered that recent marital separation and divorce are associated with an increase in serious traffic accidents. Other life events linked to serious accidents were a child leaving home, a major purchase, and hospitalization of a partner.

(Source: *Epidemiology* 2004; 15(6): 762-766. Copyright 2004, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.)

Tough Way To Get Off Work

University of Washington researchers studied the number of work days lost because of motor vehicle crashes, among those aged 18-65. Thirty percent of occupants missed at least one day of work, with an average of 28 missed days. In 2001, 6.3 million people were involved in motor vehicle crashes. The 2.1 million working occupants lost a collec-

tive 60 million workdays, with annual productivity losses of more than \$7.5 billion. Unrestrained occupants accounted for \$5.6 billion in lost productivity.

(Source: *Inj Prev* 2004; 10(5): 314-9. Copyright 2004, BMJ Publishing Group.)

NH: Live Free And Die?

In 2004, vehicle safety belt use in the U.S. ranged from 63.2 percent in Mississippi to 95.3 percent in Arizona. New Hampshire is the only state without a mandatory seatbelt law. A 2003 survey of NH drivers found a use rate of 49.6 percent—the lowest of any state.

(Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Safety Belt Use in 2004*.)

Helmet Helper

An eight-year study of nearly 10,000 patients by researchers at the Wake Forest University School of Medicine concluded that the 30 percent of injured, non-helmeted, motorcycle riders had worse medical outcomes than those who wore helmets, regardless of drug and alcohol use. They used more hospital resources, incurred higher hospital charges, and, because they were more likely to lack insurance, the cost of their care fell to society as a whole.

(Source: *J Trauma* 2004; 57(5): 944-9. Copyright 2004, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.)

Two-Wheeled Trauma

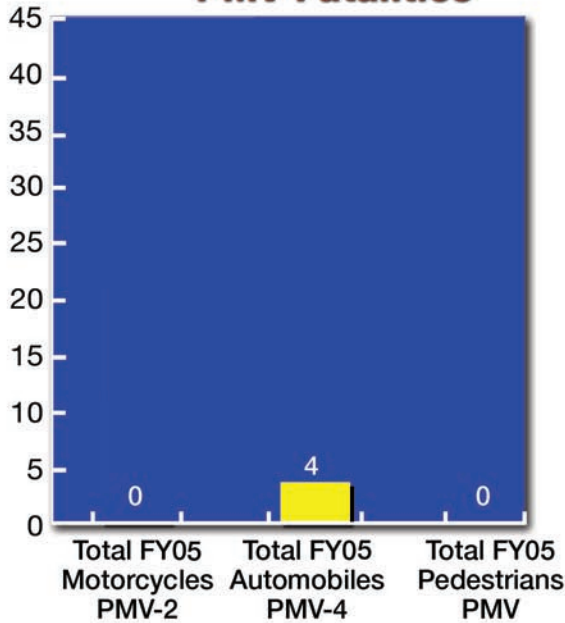
Italian researchers found that mo-peds and motorcycles, although only 20 percent of all motor vehicles, are greatly overrepresented in crashes. In 2000, 67,127 two-wheeled motor vehicles crashed, causing 1229 deaths and 69,543 injured riders. Per distance traveled, the crash risk for mopeds was 32.6 times higher than for cars, and for motorcycles, the risk was 17 times higher.

(Source: *Epidemiol Prev* 2004; 28(3): 143-9. Copyright 2004, *Cooperativa Epidemiologia E Prevenzione*.) ■

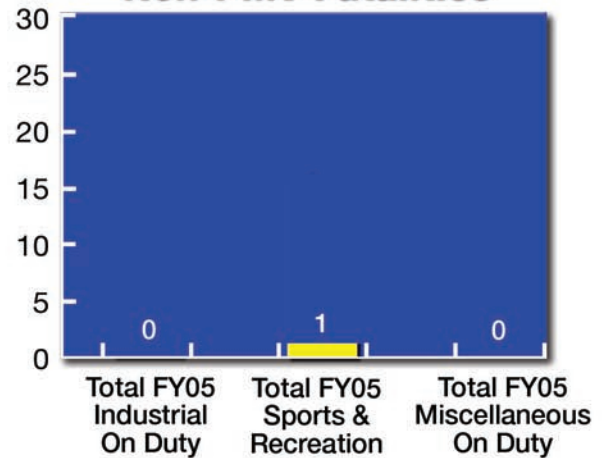


Snapshot on Safety

PMV Fatalities



Non-PMV Fatalities



1st Qtr FY05 Update

The first quarter of FY 05 shows once again that automobile mishaps continue as the leading cause of death for our Airmen. This quarter we suffered four automobile deaths and one private aircraft death. As you can see from the charts above, five Airmen died during the first quarter of this FY, all off duty. Driving too fast for road conditions, overcorrecting steering during emergencies, failure to wear seatbelts, fatigue, and alcohol are the persistent and recurring reasons. Alcohol use is pending investigation and test results in three deaths, and alcohol use was confirmed in two deaths. Failure to use seatbelts resulted in one death. Poor risk management is evident. Supervisors must ensure Lessons Learned get passed on to our folks.

Poor Risk Management, Alcohol Use, And Lack Of Driving Skills Are Major Killers

Five Airmen were traveling in a vehicle at night on a rural road. The weather was dry and clear. The driver was blinded by the headlights of an approaching vehicle and inadvertently steered off the road. The driver lost control of the vehicle while attempting to get back on the road and the vehicle struck a tree. The right rear door took the full brunt of the impact and the passenger in the right rear seat was killed. One passenger failed to wear her seatbelt. She was ejected from the vehicle and sustained relatively minor injuries. She was lucky. Another passenger was bruised and two occupants were not injured.

Lesson Learned: Nighttime driving, lack





of experience and overcorrection can be a deadly combination.

Little Geo No Match For Big Ford Explorer

The Airman was driving a Geo on a rural road and approached an intersection with a state road. The intersection has an unobstructed field of vision in all four directions. It was raining and the road was wet. The Airman failed to stop at the stop sign at the intersection, for an unknown reason, and drove directly into the path of a Ford Explorer. The Explorer driver had no time to react and struck the passenger door of the Geo at an estimated 55-65 miles per hour. The Airman was killed. Seatbelt and shoulder harness was worn. Alcohol use is pending investigation.

Lesson Learned: Failure to obey traffic control signs and not paying attention kills another Airman.

Intersections Are Dangerous!

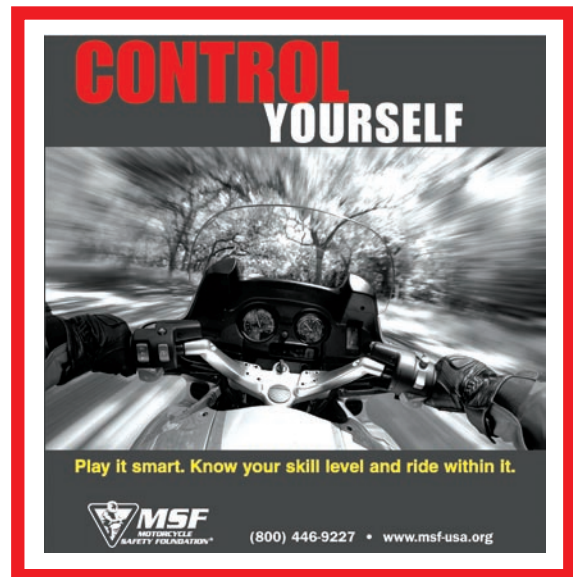
The Airman drove to see friends in another state over the weekend. Once there, they visited several casinos, gambled and drank alcoholic beverages. Around 4 p.m., they left the casino to eat at a local bar and grill, drinking more with dinner. An hour later, they went to another casino, where they gambled and drank more alcohol. Around 10:30 p.m. they left and visited several bars, where they drank even more alcohol. They next went to eat at a local restaurant at about 11:30 p.m. and left at 1 a.m. to return to their hotel room. They got into their vehicle and drove to a "T" intersection. The lanes of this road were separated by a 10-foot grassy median. They attempted a left turn and the vehicle was struck in the driver's side rear end by another vehicle at 45 miles per hour. The Airman was not wearing a seatbelt and was ejected through the open roof of the vehicle and died of head trauma. The drivers of both vehicles involved in this mishap were drunk. The two passengers, wearing seatbelts, were not injured.

Lesson Learned: Alcohol use, failure to wear seatbelts, and poor risk management resulted in another death. Intersections are dangerous and drivers should use extra caution when approaching them. Seatbelts save lives.

Advice Can Save Your Life

The fatally injured Airman was participating in a sanctioned motocross event. He had three years' experience; however, he had not raced in the past two years. After a practice session on the track, he ran his first race. Friends told him he needed more practice, but he ignored their advice. He approached the first two jumps and attempted to clear both, but did not have enough momentum. The front tire struck the front of the second jump and the front shocks compressed. The Airman's head was driven forward and struck the padded crossbar on the handlebars. He was next thrown backward off the bike as the shocks decompressed. He received fatal head injuries and died in the hospital. He was wearing all required protective equipment. His speed at the time of the mishap was estimated at 20 miles per hour. A minimum speed of 25 was needed for the bike to clear both jumps.

Lesson Learned: Overconfidence coupled with diminished skills can be deadly. ■





When you ride ...

Protect your hide