without sacrificing taste “stealthy cooking.” Stealthy cooking provides diners with the same menu items, such as meatloaf and baked fish, but makes the items healthier by using leaner meat and different varieties of fish (higher in omega-3 fatty acids) and by changing preparation methods.

“We’re reviewing a lot of the dining facilities’ menus and just making sure that they are using nutrition in a stealth way,” Captain Brooks said. “Maybe adding whole-wheat pasta or whole-grain rice to dishes (in place of) regular white pasta.”

Sergeant Slaughter said the Mieau dining facility has been quite successful at providing nutritious meals that diners swear were prepared the old-fashioned, “deep fry them all and let the gods sort them out” way.

“Our customer base doesn’t really notice all the changes we’ve actually done,” said the dining facility manager. “We took the deep-fat fryers out of our dining facility, and our fried chicken is not fried any more. We are not trying to get rid of all the fried food, but we are trying to offer healthier choices so that the customer has an option if they want to eat healthy.”

Variety and Creativity: Keys to Success

Captain Brooks admitted that there is a tradeoff in the fueling program because removing all the so-called “bad food” from dining facility menus could drive diners away. He said the program is about offering healthy alternatives, not simply deleting less healthy ones.

“We usually try to offer a variety, so that it’s not all green,” said Captain Brooks. “We are not trying to get rid of all the fried food, but we are trying to offer healthier choices so that the customer has an option if they want to eat healthy.”

Dining facility staffs have begun competing to see which facility can go the longest without using its deep-fat fryers, and other initiatives are prompting patrons to eat healthy.

“Tying Performance Meal of the Day,” and it includes the most nutritious entrees from the meal menu.

Chief Donaldson pointed out that the Mieau dining facility team has risen to the challenge of offering novel approaches to getting diners to eat healthily.

One creative approach is to offer meals that emulate the combo meal menus offered at fast food restaurants but with a healthy twist. The meal is called the “High Performance Meal of the Day,” and it includes the most nutritious entrees from the meal menu.

Mieau also had a “Biggest Loser” competition that included nutrition classes taught by dining facility staff. The winner was a senior officer who lost 17 pounds in 60 days while eating in the dining facility.

Mieau’s dining facility also has made its healthy eating competitions and educational programs available to all members of the community.

Educating the Public

In addition to dining facilities, Captain Brooks said partnerships are being forged with agencies ranging from wellness centers to communities to create “public health-type” initiatives to reach the entire USAREUR team. The concept of performance is key to the program, and the USAREUR team needs to know how to fuel their bodies and minds to be at their best.

“We are trying to treat these people as athletes. It’s not just for performance nutrition; you’ve got to think, too, of cognitive nutrition,” he said. “Just because you sit behind a desk doesn’t mean you still can’t eat healthy.”

No matter what their jobs people hold, their brains need to function properly. Captain Brooks said this requires fueling up with the nutrients, vitamins, and minerals found in healthy foods.

Analyzing Success

Fueling the Team program leaders are using a variety of measures to gauge success. Chief Donaldson said the program is using lessons learned, periodic dinner surveys, and headcount analysis to continually adapt and improve during its year-plus “phase in” to dining facilities in Europe.

Captain Brooks added that other analyses adopted from the original Soldier Fueling Initiative, such as looking at Soldiers’ eating habits before and after the program’s implementation, might be employed as well.

Of course, the real measure of whether the program is working is the response of diners. Chief Donaldson said he chats with diners to get the best sense of their likes and dislikes, and those discussions indicate that for the most part diners appreciate the program and are showing a growing interest in it.

Sergeant Slaughter said he has talked to diners, too, and read the comment cards some fill out after their meals. He said the consensus is that there is no consensus. The program has mixed reviews.

The Fueling the Team program is a trailblazing effort that could revolutionize the way the Army eats and its overall level of fitness and performance. Chief Donaldson said the program is a building block, a foundation for accomplishing the Army’s mission one Soldier at a time.

“Of course [the program’s] success makes the Soldier a better Soldier because they can recover faster from PT [physical training] injuries or they have more energy to last longer and accomplish their missions,” he said.

“Any stronger Soldier makes a stronger team, makes a stronger Army.”

A rmny risk management doctrine is second to none in its depth, breadth, and clarity, yet many leaders fail to take advantage of the power of existing tools to accomplish missions safely. The most serious accidents (classes A through C) still occur in significant numbers despite the use of existing risk management techniques. Changes must be made if the Army is to achieve breakthrough results in safety and entrench risk management in its culture. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate how current practices in the application of risk management doctrine at the unit level prevent the Army from reaching its safety goals and to propose modifications to the risk management worksheet that will correct those practices.

Ineffective Practices

While deployed to Baghdad from November 2007 to January 2009, I served as the company commander of the 57th Transportation Company and reviewed risk assessments for more than 800 missions. I also observed the battalion commander review more than 2,000 logistics convoys. While in Baghdad, my unit served under two Active Army support battalions from two installations and received convoy escorts from three different Army Reserve Infantry companies.

I observed a number of ineffective practices that were common among multiple units throughout the deployment. Many of these practices were the same ones that I was guilty of practicing as an airborne Infantry platoon leader. These practices included—

Allowing risk to compound.

A not-just-for-performance piece of engineer equipment is loaded onto a trailer for transport from Forward Operating Base Hammer to Victory Base Complex. Composite risk management requirements must be followed in this operation to ensure the safety of both personnel and equipment.

Operational Risk Management

Failure to conduct efficient operational risk management can cause unnecessary accidents. A few simple operational risk management procedures can reduce accidents and increase Soldier safety.

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The last habit to be addressed is the timing of the completion and approval of the RMW. The approval authority should approve missions based on residual risk for hazards during planning, preexecution, and execution. The approval authority signs the risk assessment in the planning phase and may delegate the pre-execution and execution reevaluations one level down. Delegation of the reevaluation includes specific instructions about notification in the event that the hazards of the mission are upgraded because of changes in conditions. The approval authority may choose to retain direct reevaluation responsibility if he wishes.

Composite risk management doctrine is sound, but it is not embedded in Army culture. The operational risk management worksheet embeds this doctrine and will help the Army reduce on-duty accidents in a dramatic way over the long term. Operational risk management will help the Army keep the promise of “Mission First, Soldiers Always” by providing the right information at the right time, resulting in improved decisionmaking, resource allocation, Soldier survivability, and mission accomplishment.

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An M1 Abrams tank is loaded onto a flatbed trailer for redegradation from a small base in Baghdad, Iraq, back to Victory Base Complex.

Leaders feel more comfortable about all of the risks being addressed by controls, they do not result in safer operations. I frequently found that critical hazard controls were buried under trivial ones. During my tour, a convoy commanded by a warrant officer often read off a long list of hazards and controls at the end of an already long convoy brief. Few Soldiers listened to the litany of hazards and controls. Some of this was due to the repetitive nature of the missions, but some of it was also due to human limits for information retention.

Within the safety brief, the list of controls included actions such as rehearsals that were already complete and the designation of hazard management rank of the leader of the convoy. Rebriefing these controls provided information that the Soldiers did not need and initiated the mental trigger for them to stop paying attention. Also on the list were many known standards and regulations. Reinforcing the most relevant standards for a mission has significant value, but an extensive list has the opposite effect and negates any intended emphasis. As a result, Soldiers may have successfully executed the controls that prevent minor accidents but neglected the controls that prevent a catastrophe.

The Soldiers and leaders did not intend to execute some of the controls. I believe the primary cause for this trend was the dilution of emphasis and competition among the laundry list of tasks on the RMW. It is the approval authority’s responsibility to provide clear, prioritized instructions free of nuance. The current form of the RMW does not set the conditions for this.

Foundation for Accident Prevention

Although long risk assessments address every conceivable risk, they fail to provide a foundation for preventing the most serious accidents. The solution to this situation is twofold.

First, conduct a thorough risk assessment. Prioritize the list of hazards based on residual risk. Controls identified in the planning and preparation phase of the mission should be executed. Selecting the right level of leader for the current mission is key. Conducing rehearsals are all essential elements to successful mission execution and should be part of company standard operating procedures. Rehearsals in particular aid in developing the subconscious execution that is so critical to effective units. These controls, however, need not be reinforced in the mission brief as they are already completed. This leads to the second component of the solution.

During the mission brief, the controls requiring specific Soldier actions during execution, particularly those that are not routine, are the residual ingredients of the RMW. I call this component of the RMW “the execution list.” Soldiers and noncommissioned officers already have tremendous amount of information to process, and it is critical that they do not receive any that is unnecessary.

The number of hazards for a specific activity should be limited to seven on the execution list. This facilitates greater emphasis on the most salient hazards. It also provides leaders with specific areas on which to focus. Research shows that it takes many repetitions of a task to make it subconscious. Limiting the number of hazards to seven improves the probability that Soldiers will listen to, remember, and execute the controls and that leaders will enforce them.

As specific controls are repeated and enforced over multiple cycles, nonprogrammed behaviors become programmed. Once a control becomes habitual, remove it from the list and prove specific hazard control not placed on the execution list. This method results in a dependable ratcheting down of risk over time.

The approval authority should approve missions based on the full list of hazards and controls and validate the top seven hazards on the execution list. This will allow leaders to address lower risk hazards with specific controls in the mission planning phase while preventing the dilution of the most critical controls during execution.

Reused RMWs

A secondary effect of long RMWs is the copying of risk assessments from previous missions without performing mission-specific analysis. During my tour, I required handwritten RMWs from leaders to combat this trend. Convoy commanders frequently handed the battalion commander risk assessment that contained hazards irrelevant to the current mission. Most officers have seen RMWs for interoperations that included hot-weather injury risks. While limiting the number of hazards for the execution list will not eliminate the tendency to reuse RMWs, it causes leaders to think harder about which hazards and controls are on that list.

RMW Approval

The last habit to be addressed is the timing of the completion and approval of the RMW. One of the key characteristics of risk management is that it is a continuous process. Therefore, the current Army culture surrounding risk management involves a single evaluation that is rarely modified or reevaluated as the mission progresses through planning and execution.

One of the lessons I learned as an approval authority was that reviewing the RMW the day of the mission did not provide the time needed to make adjustments. As mission execution gets closer, fewer risk control options are available. Identifying specific leaders for more difficult missions, rehearsals, and equipment inspections is a critical control that is not available as time runs out. Mission changes in this timeframe result in greater risk as leaders include unplanned activities in their timelines. This stress before execution often leads to confusion about priorities and results in the neglect of other controls. A leader racing out to notify Soldiers of modified timelines close to execution also causes subordinates to lose confidence in him.

The corresponding problem with completing the RMW too early is that conditions on the ground, such as enemy and weather, can change significantly or new hazards can emerge before execution, affecting mission risk. The solution to this problem is to include boxes on the right-hand side of the RMW for each hazard, where leaders can input the residual risk for hazards during planning, preexecution, and execution. The approval authority signs the risk assessment in the planning phase and may delegate the pre-execution and execution reevaluations one level down. Delegation of the reevaluation includes specific instructions about the decision in the event that the hazards of the mission are upgraded because of changes in conditions. The approval authority may choose to retain direct reevaluation responsibility if he wishes.

Composite risk management doctrine is sound, but it is not embedded in Army culture. The operational risk management worksheet embeds this doctrine and will help the Army reduce on-duty accidents in a dramatic way over the long term. Operational risk management will help the Army keep its emphasis on “Mission First, Soldiers Always” by providing the right information at the right time, resulting in improved decisionmaking, resource allocation, Soldier survivability, and mission accomplishment.

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