

Myth

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they were based on Gulf War Veterans. It can be assumed the study of Gulf War vets has the same significance and impact as OIF/OEF vets. Understanding the effect of deployment on the risk of fatal motor vehicle crashes, by Dr T.I. Hooper along with an earlier study conducted by Kang and Bullman have researched this issue in great detail. The earlier study by Kang and Bullman indicates a 31 percent increase and the later study by Hooper shows a 45 percent increase in the odds of a fatal crash for redeploying personnel when compared to the average rate. This phenomenon is evident in the first three years of redeployment and declines to no effect after seven years. Possible explanations include: increased levels of risk taking behavior, an altered perception of risk, and post-deployment traumatic stress disorders. Other significant predictors of increased risk include: age (under 26 years), marital status (single), education (high school or less), and rank (lower enlisted personnel). Leaders should continue to target their post-deployment de-compression training to affect these high risk groups.

3) Does the "safety climate" of an organization influence injury occurrence?

An organization's safety climate is a snapshot of the prevailing sense of safety among its personnel at a specific period of time. The presence or absence of a positive safety climate of an organization is often cited as a predictor of injury occurrence. The study Safety Climate and Self-reported Injury: Assessing the mediating role of employee safety control by Yeung-Hsiang Huang analyzed this issue. Evidence shows management's commitment to safety, return-to-work policies, post-injury administration and safety training are important dimensions of an organization's safety climate. It has also been shown a positive safety climate is a critical factor in predicting the history of personnel self-reporting their injuries. When leaders encourage the self-reporting of mishaps and injuries, this improves the safety climate, thereby further improving organizational safety performance.

4) Are drivers with vehicle mishaps more prone to future mishaps?

The quick answer is yes. The study Crash Involvement of Drivers with Multiple Crashes by S. Chandraratna, using data from the state of Kentucky, shows a significant number of drivers are repeatedly involved in crashes. Key predictors of crashes were: at-fault drivers, previous driver license suspensions, very young and very old drivers, male drivers, drivers with both speeding and non-speeding citations, and drivers with recent crash involvement.

5) Are personnel with high risk behavior more prone to injury and what are some characteristics behind high risk behavior?

A study by G.E. Ryb entitled Risk Perception and Impulsivity: Association with risky behaviors and substance abuse disorders, researched this issue with interesting results which confirm an association between high risk behavior and injury. High risk behavior tends to stem from highly impulsive individuals with a low perception of risk in their activities. High risk behaviors are exhibited by infrequent seat belt use, drinking and driving, riding with a drunk driver, binge drinking, and "speeding for the thrill". In conjunction with substance abuse, individuals with high risk behaviors are significantly associated with the occurrence of blunt trauma in-patient populations. A similar study, Individual difference factors in risky driving: the roles of anger/hostility, conscientiousness, and sensation-seeking by D.C. Schwebel also supports similar concepts on risky behavior. This study clearly indicates the combined roles of anger/hostility, conscientiousness (the lack of), and sensation-seeking, emerge as the best predictor of driving violations and risky driving behaviors. Another study, Risky Driving Habits and Motor Vehicle Driver Injury by S. Blows, concludes speeding for thrills, driving 20 Km/h over the speed limit and drivers with a traffic conviction within 12 months were two to four times more likely to have been injured over the same time period. Driving unlicensed was a risk factor mainly for older drivers than younger drivers, while speeding posed a stronger risk factor for younger drivers rather than older drivers. These studies somewhat

dovetail the concept high risk drivers tend to be characterized by impulsive sensation-seekers, with a low perception their behavior exposes them to great risk motor vehicle crashes.

6) Is risk taking behavior all the same?

Types of risk taking behavior tend to be different and are based on motivations and attitudes towards risk. In C. Musselwhite's study Attitudes Towards Vehicle Driving behavior: Categorizing and contextualizing risk, he concluded risks are based on motivations. Those drivers who took risks unintentionally form the largest group. Three groups who took deliberate risk were: a) reactive risk takers who took risks when reacting to stress or being in a hurry, b) calculated risk takers who took risks when they feel it is safe to do so, and c) continuous risk takers took risks for their own sake.

7) Cellular phones while driving. Am I safer using a hands-free device?

The study titled Mobile Phone Use-Effects of Handheld and Hands-free Phones on Driving Performance by J.E.B. Tornros used simulated driving in both rural and urban scenarios. This study found during phone dialing experiments driving performance was impaired by both types of phones. In the conversation experiments, the driving performance was rated better for hands-free than for the handheld mode. A separate study conducted by K.E. Beede, Engrossed in Conversation: The Impact of Cell Phones on Simulated Driving Performance, found in the categories of: traffic violations, maintaining lane position, attention lapses, and response time, driving performance was significantly impacted even with hands-free phones. These two studies lend further proof of the dangers of drivers being distracted by cell phones that are either hand-held or hands-free.

8) What are the risks inherent with night driving?

Many studies show night driving is more risky in terms of crash involvement than day driving when normalized by the distance traveled. This can be attributed to the greater use of alcohol at night, the effects of fatigue being more prominent, and the risks associated with reduced visibility. The study by M.D. Keall, The contribution of alcohol to night time crash risk and other risks of night driving, indicate the overall effect of alcohol was shown to contribute almost 50 percent of weekend night time risk for drivers under 40, but mostly for lower volume roads. Higher-volume roads tend to be avoided by drinking drivers. Excluding the risk associated with drinking and driving, the risk of

night driving tends to decrease with age. Relative to day or night, roads illuminated at night are less risky than those that are not illuminated.

9) How do we get servicemembers to buckle up?

The problem of getting servicemembers to buckle up is a constant challenge. Getting Americans to Buckle Up: The efficacy of state seat belt laws by D.J. Houston studied seat belt use rates over the period 1991 through 2001. This study determined states with seat belt laws are associated with an average 9.1 percent higher use rates and the enforcement provisions are critical to seat belt usage. Current median fine of \$25 was associated with an additional 3.8 percent increase in seat belt use. The study recommended larger fines of \$50 to be more effective. The greater the fine or penalty for seat belt violation, accompanied by enforcement, the greater the compliance.

10) Are car drivers holding a motorcycle license less responsible for motorcycle-car crash occurrence?

The study by D. Maganuzzo, with the same title as this question, determined car drivers who also hold a motorcycle license are less likely to be responsible for crashes involving motorcycles and cars. He attributes this phenomenon to car drivers who have acquired the ability from their own motorcycle knowledge and experience to predict motorcycle maneuvers and avoid or induce the motorcycle-car crash occurrence.

11) What factor does speed play in vehicle crashes?

Vehicle speed plays a critical factor in road safety. Vehicle speed not only affects the severity of injury to the occupants in a crash, but it also plays a factor in the rates of vehicle crashes. Driving Speed and the Risk of Road Crashes: A Review, by L. Aarts determined crash rates increase faster with an increase in speed on minor roads than they do on major roads. She conclusively noted a vehicle that moved much faster than other traffic around it had a higher crash rate. The larger the differences in speed between vehicles results in a higher crash rate. Additionally, lane width, junction density, and traffic flow were all found to interact with the speed-to-crash rate correlation.

Many of these current scientific studies either support or debunk our ideas on safety. The challenge is how to incorporate the latest studies and "best practices" which affect the safety of the military and civilian personnel in our safety policies, training and education process.

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