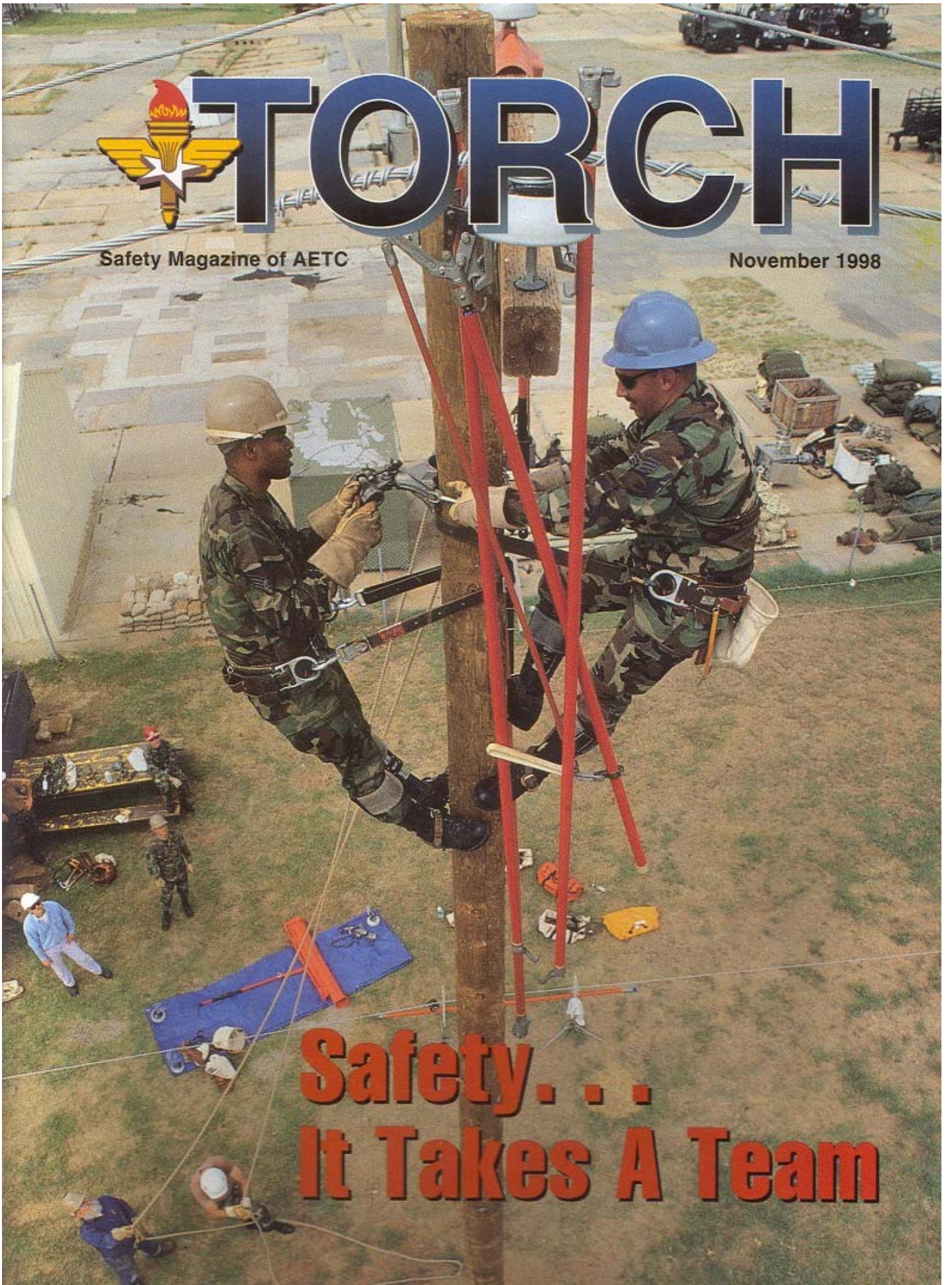




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**Safety...
It Takes A Team**

Helmet Fires

by Maj Ned Lynch, 309th FS/SEF, Luke AFB
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Single-seat pilots face some of the most challenging environments. We have to organize our own resources plus work with the team to accomplish the mission while preparing for such immediate contingencies as weather, threats, inflight emergencies (IFE), and alternate missions. Sometimes these “helmet fires” associated with task saturation get the best of us, resulting in mishaps.

Putting out these fires involves staying ahead of the jet through preparation and anticipation — preparing for the “worst case” and anticipating the next event in the chain. How to maintain this state of situational awareness (SA) varies from pilot to pilot. Here are some proven concepts:

Preparation

Mission planning — Led by the flight lead, plan together as a team, and the mission will flow smoothly even if you’re faced with contingencies or problems.

Know the capabilities of your flight — Are you flying with a new wingman? What are the currencies of everyone in

your flight? The flight commander should be the key to answering any questions regarding personnel problems.

Briefing — The “on time” brief should be the melding of mission planning information, tailored to the least experienced pilot, and not an introduction to the plan. A poor briefing usually equates to a flight filled with multiple “helmet fires.”

Preflight — Slip your times to accommodate last minute changes. Disruptions to pacing and habit patterns increase task saturation.

by SFA Jeffrey Allen, 1st OTCS

Ground operations — Review your game plan for such things as takeoff emergencies where critical actions must be accomplished with little time for analysis. Thinking through your game plan, before you really need to set it into motion, can increase your chances of coming back alive.

Proficiency — When was the last time you accomplished an emergency procedures simulator or cracked open your Dash One? Did you *really* accomplish an SEPT last month? Remember, you're responsible for your own proficiency and knowledge, and during an emergency is not the time to discover you're not as up on things as you need to be.

Personal life — Are you fit to pull high Gs? You should have a personal fitness program, including proper nutrition, and you should be getting enough crew rest to maintain a high degree of alertness and beat fatigue. If not, make some lifestyle changes.

Anticipation

Wingman anticipation — Anticipate and lead turn the next event. Use any idle time to accomplish checks (ops, fence, descent) or avionics setup (radar, navigation, IFF) prior to flight lead's call. This includes anticipating formation changes plus being ready to back flight lead during an emergency—reading the checklist or calling critical altitudes, for instance.

Flight lead/IP anticipation — Know your flight's position and fuel state. Put yourself in their cockpits to anticipate what they're doing before you direct a task. Have a game plan ready for IFEs, blind wingmen, rejoins, obtaining clearances, weather, and backup missions.

Communications — Check-ins usually indicate the state of the flight SA, with initial check-ins usually setting the tone for the entire mission. Anticipating radio changes and using clear, concise 3-1 comm will protect against missing critical information. A formation should work as a team in accordance with the briefing, so think before you transmit, but don't hesitate to call out a dangerous situation or conflict.

Cross-checks — At low altitude, check near and far terrain prior to accomplishing any other task, and using your gages can reduce "helmet fires" in poor weather or at night. Passing critical flight info to a wingman may reduce spatial disorientation.

Cockpit/Crew Resource Management (CRM) is one of those "buzz words" many single-seat pilots "blow off." We do it every day — staying ahead of the aircraft by being prepared and anticipating, so CRM issues are not new! But I encourage you to take a look at CRM in a different way and see if you can really apply the concepts to your cockpit. It only takes one breakdown in situational awareness to teach a lesson, but some lessons are not forgiving and result in mishaps. *Prepare and Anticipate* — CRM concepts we can all live by. ✈

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by MSgt Dave Nolan, Airman

