
If the MMRB refers the soldier to the Army's Physical Disability System, the next step is a Medical Evaluation Board (MEB). Although the MEB is composed solely of doctors, your input is important in the way they view the soldier's condition and whether he is deemed medically acceptable or unacceptable for military service. (Don't expect the doctor to call you for input; call the doctor, and tell him or her what the soldier realistically can or cannot do.) If the MEB finds the soldier medically unacceptable and forwards the case to a Physical Evaluation Board (PEB), your evaluation will again carry considerable weight in that board's determination as to the soldier's fitness.

AR 635-40, *Physical Evaluation for Retention, Retirement or Separation*, explains the policies and procedures the PEBs follow. Chapter 2-9 directs unit commanders to become thoroughly familiar with the purpose of the Army Physical Disability Evaluation System.

I know what you're thinking, and until a few months ago, I didn't know anything about the system either. Here are some tips that will ease your profile-related stress and speed up the disability evaluation process:

- Make sure medical personnel do not give your soldier the profile form (DA Form 3349). Look at the "Distribution" block on the form; you get the original and one copy, so *you* give the soldier a copy of the profile, not the doctor. Note the block that says "Action By Unit Com-

mander." If you want a board to find a soldier unfit, fill this block out and make it part of the MEB record.

Additionally, if the doctor has given the profile directly to the soldier, there's a good chance the rest of the distribution has not been made properly either. Your military personnel office (MILPO) is supposed to get a copy so the proper SIDPERS database entries can be made. Chances are that if you receive a soldier with limitations so severe that he or she

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never should have been assigned to you, it is because PERSCOM never received a copy of the soldier's assignment limitations.

- Call the medical personnel who write the profiles. In most cases they consider your input valuable but are too swamped to track you down. And if they don't hear from you, the soldier is their only source of information.

- A P3 profile, by itself, does not mean nondeployable. (Check AR 600-60, chapter 2-4.) Soldiers deploy with P3 profiles all the time. If your first sergeant's only medical problem is that

he wears a hearing aid (H3), are you going to tell him he's not deployable?

- It is outside the physician's responsibility to state "No field duty," "Nondeployable" or "No PT." If a soldier cannot take any form of PT test, he should have a P4 profile instead of a P3. Call the doctor; it makes a difference.

The U.S. Army Physical Disability Agency recently completed initial staffing on an action that may lead to the suspension of MMRBs for one year as a test. During this period, soldiers who failed to meet medical retention standards would be sent directly to PEBs. Soldiers seeking MOS reclassification for medical reasons would apply to PERSCOM as any other soldiers would do. In the absence of the MMRB, the commander and the physician would determine whether or not the soldier entered the disability system. If approved, the test will begin in the third or fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 1996.

If I can assist you in understanding the P3 system, call me at DSN 295-7326/7328, or commercial (301) 295-7326. Or write to: Commander, U.S. Army Physical Disability Agency, ATTN: Plans and Policy, Forest Glen Section-WRAMC, Washington, DC 20307-5001.

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Managing Stress In Cold Climates

MAJOR PATRICK J. SWEENEY

The intense stress of operating in cold weather can seriously threaten a unit's ability and will to fight. Stress reduces

the soldiers' capacity for thinking clearly, causes them to tire more quickly, and makes them more susceptible to injury

and illness. Leaders can learn to control this stress, however, and use it to their advantage.

For example, in the winter of 1939-1940, Finnish light infantry leaders used their ability to fight in the extreme cold to help demoralize and destroy the Soviet 44th Motorized Rifle Division, which held superiority in both numbers and firepower. Finnish commanders had developed the skills to cope with the cold and the equipment to support cold-weather operations. By comparison, the Soviet soldiers lacked the training and equipment to operate in such extreme cold temperatures, and this reduced their ability to fight and diminished their will to resist. This historical example highlights the importance of managing the stress of extreme cold weather.

Stress is the body's response to any unusual demands upon it. When confronted with a situation in which the perceived challenges or threats are equal to or greater than the perceived ability to meet them, the body responds physically and mentally to meet the demands.

The physical response is an automatic process initially characterized by an increase in heart rate and breathing, along with sweating and "butterflies in the stomach." If a person remains in the stress-inducing situation, his heart rate and breathing return to normal after a few minutes, but the body maintains the state of alertness through elevated hormone levels.

Prolonged physical stress on the body, caused by exposure to a continuing stress agent, increases susceptibility to fatigue and disease because the body must use its energy reserves to maintain the heightened alertness. This expended energy—coupled with that required to meet the physical demands of moving over or through the snow, keeping the body warm, and conducting continuous operations—can quickly deplete energy reserves.

Similarly, prolonged physical tension suppresses the body's immune system, thus increasing susceptibility to disease. Researchers do not fully understand why this is true, but a plausible explanation is that the hormones needed to sustain the body's physical alertness hinder the reproduction of cells that fight infection. During World War II, because of the stress of serving on the isolated, wind-and-

storm-swept Aleutian Islands, many flight crewmen fell victim to lingering head colds, anemia, ear infections, psychosomatic pain, and psychological withdrawal. Fatigue and illness can quickly erode the physical ability and the mental resolve soldiers need to accomplish the mission.

The mental component of stress involves heightened states of mental activity. Although this increased activity enables a person to make quick decisions, too much may eventually impair clear thinking and the ability and the will to perform mission tasks.

A leader can manage the mental stress associated with operating in cold environments by building his soldiers' confidence that they can handle the challenges, and by providing them with accurate information on what is required of them. The

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best way for a leader to boost his soldiers' confidence is to conduct individual training in the use of specialized cold-weather clothing and equipment and unit training on mission essential tasks in cold weather.

Managing the stress caused by cold weather includes preventive measures before deployment and active measures during deployment.

Before Deployment

Soldiers' confidence in their ability to operate in cold weather is best influenced by good training and leadership before deploying to a cold weather region.

Training. Training must focus on teaching soldiers how to use and maintain the special equipment they will need to survive and operate in cold environments—squad stoves, tents, ahkios, cold weather clothing, snowshoes, and skis. Mastering these survival skills helps build the soldiers' confidence because it gives them some control over their environment. And once they have this control, their self-confidence further increases, thus reducing stress.

Training on the basic survival skills can be conducted in a classroom or motor pool. Once soldiers master these skills, they should be required to perform the same tasks in actual cold weather, depending upon their geographical location. If conditions permit, the soldiers might wear their cold weather clothing during battle drills and critical platoon tasks. This will give them a feel for the ways in which the usual procedures need to be modified in cold weather. If a unit's location prohibits the practice, access to large walk-in freezers at a cold-storage facility or a packing house might allow soldiers to test their cold weather clothing.

Leaders should also plan for additional time after the unit arrives in the theater of operation for the soldiers to acclimatize and practice battle drills and platoon collective tasks.

Physical Conditioning. Good physical conditioning reduces stress by boosting the soldiers' confidence in themselves and their ability to handle the tasks they will face. In addition, it helps soldiers prepare their bodies for the rigors of cold weather operations by reducing their susceptibility to fatigue.

Before deploying, leaders should design a physical training program that builds aerobic endurance and increases leg strength so the soldiers will be better able to move on snowshoes or skis.

Sharing Information. Leaders should give soldiers accurate information to help them form realistic expectations of what they will have to do to perform their mission. Since many soldiers have had no experience with extreme cold (-20 degrees Fahrenheit and below), they often have exaggerated ideas of what it takes to operate in cold weather, and this increases the likelihood of stress.

Among the good sources of information on cold weather operations are soldiers who have had experience in cold weather environments; doctrinal manuals such as Field Manual (FM) 31-70, *Basic Cold Weather Manual*, and FM 31-71, *Northern Operations*; and professional publications such as Leavenworth Papers No. 5, *Fighting the Russians in Winter: Three Case Studies* and *The Thousand Mile War*.

Cohesion. Leaders should follow the guidelines in FM 22-102, *Soldier Team Development*, to build cohesion in the unit. Cohesion helps fight stress by providing a social support system in which individual soldiers can talk about their fears and learn coping strategies. And knowing that other members of the unit will provide any help he may need boosts a soldier's confidence in his own ability to meet the demands of operating in cold weather.

A buddy-team strategy in each squad assures soldiers that someone besides the chain-of-command is looking out for them. In addition, a soldier's knowledge that his peers are relying on him, coupled with a fear of letting them down, can give him an incentive for successfully managing the stress of cold weather. A soldier's consideration for his squad or platoon mates—and concern about their perception of his courage—give him the motivation to face great dangers.

Trust. Developing trust in the unit's leaders will help counter the stress associated with cold weather. Soldiers who believe their leaders care about them and are competent are likely to think more highly of their own abilities.

Leaders need to know when to modify techniques, tactics, and procedures (TTPs) to protect their soldiers' welfare while operating in extreme cold weather. For instance, the severe winter of 1941-1942 was one of the major reasons the Germans changed from an elastic defense to the doctrine of a village-based strongpoint. Villages offered immediate shelter from the elements, which solved many of the potential health problems associated with operating in the cold. Warm shelters reduced the chance of disease because the soldiers could heat food, thaw drinking water, and perform personal hygiene. Also, warm shelters reduced the medical complications caused by exposure, thus increasing the rate of survival for wounded soldiers.

Leaders must keep their plans simple and allow extra time for assigned tasks. For instance, leaders must give soldiers extra time to march order their equipment because of the reduced manual dexterity of the soldiers, the stiffness of cold equipment (communication cables and canvas),

the need to adjust clothing, and the increased amount of equipment that must be packed. Likewise, leaders need to plan on 50 to 75 percent more time for foot movements because of the need to break trail, the increased soldier load, the slower rate of movement over snow and ice, and the need to establish heated shelters as soon as the march ends. In fact, extra time is needed to perform most individual and collective tasks in extreme cold weather; unrealistic expectations with regard to time constraints only compound the stress. In addition, leaders should modify operating procedures by assigning a higher priority to providing warmth and shelter. For example, the priority of work for an advance party must include setting up a heat source immediately after securing the new position.

Some other examples of modifications to TTPs are: setting up warming tents for

To manage the stress caused by cold weather, a leader must take preventive measures before deployment and active measures during deployment.

perimeter guards; ensuring that vehicles travel in groups and that at least one vehicle has a radio; allowing crews to warm up between missions; and ensuring that soldiers have their survival packs when they leave the unit.

Maintenance. Before deployment, leaders need to ensure that vehicle batteries are fully charged and that operators are familiar with the procedures for operating their equipment in cold weather as well as applying Arctic-grade lubricants, if specified by the operator's manual. These preventive maintenance measures help reduce stress by increasing the soldiers' confidence in their equipment; this, in turn, increases their perception of being able to handle the demands of operating in a cold environment. These preventive measures also help reduce the potential for maintenance problems, which will increase the stress.

Military leaders in both World Wars learned that special lubricants had to be used on equipment in extreme cold, and this is still true. If lubricants do not main-

tain their viscosity at extremely low temperatures, the moving mechanisms on weapons and vehicles will freeze solid and severely hamper a unit's ability and will to fight. (Further information on preparing equipment for cold weather is found in FM 9-207, *Operation and Maintenance of Ordnance Materiel in Cold Weather*.)

During Operations

The "Follow Me" concept is one of the most useful tools a leader has for combating stress in his unit during cold weather operations. Most soldiers—unsure how to act or feel when confronted with such an unfamiliar and threatening situation—look to their leaders for cues on appropriate behavior or emotions.

Leadership. During cold weather operations, leaders should acknowledge the dangers the climate presents. At the same time, however, they should try to demonstrate productive coping behavior by performing as if the cold weather does not bother them. Soldiers who see their leaders coping with the stress of cold climates are more likely to behave in a similar manner. Leaders must be out in the cold, guiding, directing, and encouraging soldiers to accomplish the mission.

At the same time, leaders must also take care of their own needs. If a leader begins to feel overwhelmed by the stress of operating in cold weather, he should seek out trusted peers and talk about his concerns. This sharing may help him realize that his own concerns have been exaggerated and help clarify his perception of leading in cold weather. Through these discussions, all leaders may learn more efficient ways to stay warm during cold weather operations, which will increase their confidence that they can successfully cope with the demands of the situation.

Basic Soldier Health. The chain of command, especially squad leaders, must be attentive to the soldiers' welfare. Physical health has a significant effect on confidence and motivation. In extreme cold weather, soldiers often fail to drink enough fluids because the water in their canteens is cold or frozen, and they have a similar aversion to eating cold or frozen combat meals, to sleeping, and to



The stress of cold-weather operations—particularly when combined with factors such as NBC conditions—can limit the effectiveness of the combined arms team.

performing basic hygiene.

Leaders must check to ensure that their soldiers are drinking enough fluids, eating properly, relieving themselves regularly, maintaining good hygiene, and sleeping at least four to five hours a day.

Because of the danger of dehydration, leaders must take steps to overcome the soldiers' reluctance to drink. Each squad leader should make sure his soldiers put their canteens in their sleeping bags (or between their sleeping bags and foam mats) at night and that they fill them with hot water each morning to prevent freezing during the day. In addition, leaders should provide hot liquids whenever possible—tea, chocolate, or soup. Leaders also need to train soldiers to check their urine for signs of dehydration; heavy yellow or amber urine indicates too little fluid. Squad leaders should periodically check the squad urination point for heavy yellow or amber spots.

Regular, balanced meals ensure that soldiers have the energy to meet the demands of operating in a cold environment. Leaders can encourage soldiers to eat balanced meals by providing stoves to heat MREs (meals, ready to eat) as well as a warm place in which to eat them. When meals cannot be heated, the soldiers can place the MRE packets inside their shirts to be warmed by body heat.

Leaders can encourage soldiers to eat T-rations by serving the food in a warm tent with an adjacent heated tent in which they can eat. Soldiers may feel it is not worth the effort to get fully dressed to go and get hot food that may be frozen by the time they carry it back to a squad tent.

Elimination is a particularly difficult problem. Extreme cold, understandably, causes some soldiers to postpone defecation until the last possible minute, and this practice can cause painful intestinal problems.

Defecating in extreme cold must be a well-rehearsed process that reduces exposure to an absolute minimum. Leaders should teach soldiers these procedures and encourage them to practice in the privacy of their rooms before deployment to a cold environment. Learning these procedures will encourage soldiers to defecate on a regular basis, thus preventing intestinal problems that could compound the stress.

Although leaders can provide a heated tent latrine, this alternative has several disadvantages:

First, during a high-tempo operation it is not feasible to set up a tent and stove for a latrine. And soldiers who have come to depend on this heated environment may decide to wait until the tent latrine is set up. Using the squad tent for this purpose must be discouraged for sanitary reasons.

Second, from the organization's perspective, a tent latrine wastes man-hours

because it usually has to be heated for each individual visitor. Safety concerns and regulations prohibit a lighted stove from being left unattended, and in extreme cold it takes a Yukon stove seven to ten minutes to heat the tent to a comfortable level. Thus, for each trip to the latrine, a soldier wastes ten minutes waiting for the tent to heat. Finally, using a tent for a latrine limits its use for other purposes because of the relatively permanent odor.

Cold Weather Clothing. Leaders must ensure that soldiers do not overdress, because the sweating that results can itself cause either cold or heat injuries. Squad leaders must teach soldiers not to wear cotton underwear under the polypropylene long underwear; cotton absorbs sweat and keeps it close to the body, thus increasing the risk of cold weather injury. If the soldiers are going to perform strenuous physical activity such as cross-country skiing, leaders need to ensure that they dress in layers with minimal clothing (polypropylene underwear, olive drab wool shirt, and parka shell). Leaders need to make sure soldiers wear the cold weather clothing properly and change into clean clothes whenever possible.

Soldiers must wear gloves or glove inserts when handling metal objects or petroleum products. Touching cold metal with exposed skin can cause contact frostbite. Handling petroleum products in extreme cold presents an even greater hazard. These products, especially fuels, become super-cooled and can cause deep frostbite on contact with exposed skin. Support personnel should have extra gloves or mittens to use exclusively when handling petroleum products.

Foot Care. Soldiers must change their socks and dry and powder their feet roughly every four hours or after strenuous activities, to keep their feet warmer and prevent such injuries as trench-foot or frostbite. Soldiers can dry their socks on the move by placing them inside their shirts. As with cotton underwear, cotton socks should not be worn under other socks. If a heated squad tent is available, socks can be hung on the utility cords strung inside the Arctic tent liners.

During sleep periods, soldiers should

place their vapor barrier (VB) boots either under or inside their sleeping bags. The most comfortable position for the boots is under the legs. If a stove will be on during the sleep period, soldiers can hang their boots from the center pole to dry them out and keep them warm. Warm VB boots are more pleasant to put on, and they help ensure that the feet stay warm for longer periods of time.

Hygiene. Soldiers' concern for personal hygiene tends to drop with the temperature. It is often difficult to get a warm bucket of water and a warm place to wash their bodies and brush their teeth. Soldiers should be encouraged to bring commercial wipes or alcohol pads to the field for personal hygiene (face, feet, genitals). They can carry these inside their shirts so that, when they get a chance to clean their bodies, the wipes will be warm.

Leaders need to know when to modify techniques, tactics, and procedures to protect their soldiers' welfare while operating in extreme cold weather.

Squad leaders also need to make brushing teeth a priority before soldiers sleep. Good oral hygiene not only prevents mouth disease but also promotes social tranquility in the section tent.

Leaders should encourage their soldiers to get battery-operated razors for shaving, because hot water is not always available. Soldiers can put these razors in their sleeping bags at night to warm up the batteries and then shave before leaving the bags in the morning. This process saves time because soldiers do not have to wait for a bucket of water to warm up. Also, during high-tempo exercises, soldiers can put the razors in their pockets and shave before moving or during a pause in action.

Sleeping. Because of the lack of confidence in their sleeping bags, some soldiers volunteer for fire guard so they can stay by the stove during their sleeping period. A leader faced with this situation can position the soldiers close to the stove and give them tips on how to stay extra warm in a sleeping bag—wrapping up in

a poncho liner, stripping to polypropylene underwear, wearing down booties and a polypropylene balaclava (ski-mask), and stuffing the bottom of the bag with pants and shirt.

Adequate sleep helps maintain a soldier's physical and mental stamina. Fatigue tends to increase the tendency for both leaders and soldiers to overestimate the demands of a task and underestimate their ability to handle it, thus increasing stress. Sleep deprivation affects the soldiers' mental functioning and motivation, which degrades the unit's ability and will to fight.

Face Camouflage. Because of the risk of frostbite, the olive drab or white balaclava replaces face paint as part of a soldier's personal camouflage.

All of these preventive measures help fight stress by sustaining the soldiers' confidence in their ability to operate successfully in the cold.

The stress caused by cold weather, if not managed, can be as much a threat to a unit's will and ability to fight as action with the enemy. The management of stress is therefore a critical leadership task in cold weather operations.

Leaders can successfully accomplish this in their units by ensuring that the soldiers' ideas of what it will take to successfully operate in the cold do not exceed their perceived capabilities.

Leaders can help take the stress out of cold weather operations by taking preventive measures to boost the soldiers' confidence in their abilities and by providing them with information that will help them assess what is involved. As the Finnish light infantry proved when they defeated the Soviet 44th Motorized Rifle Division in World War II, the successful management of the stress induced by cold weather is indeed a combat multiplier.

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