WEC a culture of safety

Undergraduate and graduate student orientation, Fall 2009.
Wildlife is a hazardous occupation

How many friends, acquaintances, professional colleagues do you know injured or died during field work?

(my count is 7! - review staff and students present)

• Not as high as commercial fishermen, miners, cops, truckers, steelworkers, heavy construction
• But higher than lawyers, accountants, English teachers etc.
• Safety is a professional skill and obligation of the wildlife professional along with other skills and knowledge like biology, wildlife management techniques, statistics, field techniques, GIS skills, writing.

• Our goal is to have all of you treat safety as a normal, routine necessity of the work, not a special add-on or an unusual event.
Most dangerous field activities

• Aircraft - aerial surveys, low level flight, helicopters - 5 dead in FL last year!
• Motor vehicles - driving to and from the field is the most dangerous part!
• Boats and other watercraft - it takes 2 minutes and 2 inches of water to drown
Most common accidents
(review of 8,000 Earthwatch records)

- **Cuts, scrapes and falls** (footwear and inattention)
- **Sprains** and pulled muscles (lifting, overexertion)
- **Infected insect bites** (protective clothing, deet)
- **Sunburn** (protective clothing, sunscreen)
- **Dehydration** (non carbonated, non alcoholic fluids)
How do accidents usually happen?

- Very rarely a single unanticipated event

- Usually, a chain or cascade of events
  
  For the want of nail a shoe was lost
  
  For the want of shoe a horse
  
  a message
  
  A battle
  
  A war
  
  a kingdom etc.

- Recognize the chain and break it
Ooops! I thought you set the handbrake?
What must you do to be safe?

- Take personal responsibility for yourself
  - Your clothing, footwear, protective equipment, preparation,
- Advise of pre-existing conditions
  - Fitness, obesity, medical conditions, fatigue
- Inform yourself
  - Numerous sources of hazard specific information
- Prepare before you go to the field
- Support each other in safety
  - Information, Preparation, Equipment-it’s a culture
Air Safety

- WEC has never lost a person, but this is serious stuff!
- If you are going to fly in small planes or helicopters in your graduate work for any reason (surveys, getting to field sites, etc),
  - You and your graduate professor must follow new WEC rules about aircraft contracting
  - You must take a short safety course
  - If you attempt to establish a purchase order with a flight company without following WEC safety policies, your purchase order will be turned down.
- For more info about flight safety, check out the WEC website, or talk to Dr. Franklin Percival or Dr. Peter Frederick.
Wec.ufl.edu - Safety
one-stop-shop for your safety needs

- WEC Aircraft safety protocols
- Field Safety Guidelines
- Boat and airboat operation requirements and tests
- UF 15-Passenger Van safety training – This certification is required before you can operate a UF owned 15-passenger van
- The UF College of Medicine CPR and Safety Training Center
- The University of California, Berkley field safety document.
- UF Dive Safety Program – UF Contact Cheryl Thacker
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission Boater Safety Course
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission Hunter Safety Course
- More coming at wec.ufl.edu Safety

Safety- it’s a culture