

## STEP 2. ASSESS HAZARDS

Step 2 completes the risk assessment. Risk is the chance of hazard or bad consequences. This step examines each hazard in terms of probability and severity to determine the risk level of one or more hazardous incidents that can result from exposure to the hazard. This step is conducted during three steps of the military decision-making process—*mission analysis*, *COA development*, and *COA analysis*. This step is also conducted after controls are developed.

The incident must be credible in that it must have a reasonable expectation of happening. The end result is an estimate of risk from each hazard and an estimate of the overall risk to the mission caused by hazards that cannot be eliminated. Leaders must also assess the risk to civilians posed by the operation. They may need to assess the operations' impact on the environment. This step is conducted in three substeps.

### Substep A

Leaders and staffs assess each hazard in relation to the *probability* of a hazardous incident. The probability levels estimated for each hazard may be based on the mission, COAs being developed and analyzed, or frequency of a similar event. Figure 2-2 provides a summary of the five degrees of probability. The letters in parentheses following each degree (A through E) provide a symbol for depicting probability. For example, the letter *A* represents *frequent* probability.

<b>FREQUENT (A) Occurs very often, continuously experienced</b>	
Single item	Occurs very often in service life. Expected to occur several times over duration of a specific mission or operation. Always occurs.
Fleet or inventory of items	Occurs continuously during a specific mission or operation, or over a service life.
Individual soldier	Occurs very often in career. Expected to occur several times during mission or operation. Always occurs.
All soldiers exposed	Occurs continuously during a specific mission or operation.
<b>LIKELY (B) Occurs several times</b>	
Single item	Occurs several times in service life. Expected to occur during a specific mission or operation.
Fleet or inventory of items	Occurs at a high rate, but experienced intermittently (regular intervals, generally often,).
Individual soldier	Occurs several times in career. Expected to occur during a specific mission or operation.
All soldiers exposed	Occurs at a high rate, but experienced intermittently.
<b>OCCASIONAL (C) Occurs sporadically</b>	
Single item	Occurs some time in service life. May occur about as often as not during a specific mission or operation.
Fleet or inventory of items	Occurs several times in service life.
Individual soldier	Occurs some time in career. May occur during a specific mission or operation, but not often.
All soldiers exposed	Occurs sporadically (irregularly, sparsely, or sometimes).

Figure 2-2. Hazard Probability

<b>SELDOM (D) Remotely possible; could occur at some time</b>	
Single item	Occurs in service life, but only remotely possible. Not expected to occur during a specific mission or operation.
Fleet or inventory of items	Occurs as isolated incidents. Possible to occur some time in service life, but rarely. Usually does not occur.
Individual soldier	Occurs as isolated incident during a career. Remotely possible, but not expected to occur during a specific mission or operation.
All soldiers exposed	Occurs rarely within exposed population as isolated incidents.
<b>UNLIKELY (E) Can assume will not occur, but not impossible</b>	
Single item	Occurrence not impossible, but can assume will almost never occur in service life. Can assume will not occur during a specific mission or operation.
Fleet or inventory of items	Occurs very rarely (almost never or improbable). Incidents may occur over service life.
Individual soldier	Occurrence not impossible, but may assume will not occur in career or during a specific mission or operation.
All soldiers exposed	Occurs very rarely, but not impossible.

**Figure 2-2. Hazard Probability (continued)**

### Substep B

Substep B addresses the *severity* of each hazard. It is expressed in terms of—

- Degree of injury or illness.
- Loss of or damage to equipment or property.
- Environmental damage.
- Other mission-impairing factors such as lost combat power.

The degree of severity estimated for each hazard may be based on knowledge of the results of similar past events. Figure 2-3 provides a summary of the four degrees of hazard severity. The Roman numerals in parentheses following each degree (I through IV) provide a convenient symbol for depicting severity. For example, *I* represents the *catastrophic* degree of severity.

<b>CATASTROPHIC (I)</b>	Loss of ability to accomplish the mission or mission failure. Death or permanent total disability (accident risk). Loss of major or mission-critical system or equipment. Major property (facility) damage. Severe environmental damage. Mission-critical security failure. Unacceptable collateral damage.
<b>CRITICAL (II)</b>	Significantly (severely) degraded mission capability or unit readiness. Permanent partial disability, temporary total disability exceeding 3 months time (accident risk). Extensive (major) damage to equipment or systems. Significant damage to property or the environment. Security failure. Significant collateral damage.
<b>MARGINAL (III)</b>	Degraded mission capability or unit readiness. Minor damage to equipment or systems, property, or the environment. Lost day due to injury or illness not exceeding 3 months (accident risk). Minor damage to property or the environment.
<b>NEGLIGIBLE (IV)</b>	Little or no adverse impact on mission capability. First aid or minor medical treatment (accident risk). Slight equipment or system damage, but fully functional and serviceable. Little or no property or environmental damage.

**Figure 2-3. Hazard Severity**

### **Substep C**

In this substep leaders and staffs expand what they understand about probable hazardous incidents into estimates of levels of risk for each identified hazard and an estimate of the overall risk for the operation. Estimating risk follows from examining the outcomes of Substeps A and B; that is, both the probability and severity of hazardous incidents. This substep is more art than science. Much depends on the use of historical lessons learned, intuitive analysis,

experience, and judgment. Uncertainty can arise in the assessment of both the probability and severity of a hazardous incident. Uncertainty results from unknowns about a situation; from incomplete, inaccurate, undependable, or contradictory information; and from unforeseen circumstances. Therefore, assessment of risk requires good judgment.

Figure 2-4 is a standardized matrix that can be used to assist in this process. Leaders and staffs enter the estimated degree of severity and probability for each hazard in Substeps A and B from the severity row and probability column, respectively. The point where the severity row and probability column intersect defines the level of risk. For example, if the hazard is estimated to have a *critical* severity (II) and a *likely* probability (B), the level of risk is high (H).

Figure 2-5 provides a summary of the levels of risk. It also provides examples of hazardous incidents for each risk level. Several examples illustrate the trade-off between tactical and accident risks.

Risk Assessment Matrix						
		Probability				
Severity		Frequent A	Likely B	Occasional C	Seldom D	Unlikely E
Catastrophic	I	E	E	H	H	M
Critical	II	E	H	H	M	L
Marginal	III	H	M	M	L	L
Negligible	IV	M	L	L	L	L
E – Extremely High Risk H – High Risk M – Moderate Risk L – Low Risk						

Figure 2-4. Risk Assessment Matrix

**E - Extremely High:** Loss of ability to accomplish the mission if hazards occur during mission. A *frequent* or likely probability of catastrophic loss (IA or IB) or *frequent* probability of *critical* loss (IIA) exists.

**Example:** A commander finds that one of his implied tasks to attack an objective involves crossing a normally shallow riverbed. After looking at the factors of METT-T, he discovers that three days of intense rain have raised the water level to rise above flood stage, with currents far in excess of his ability to safely ford with armored vehicles. After discussing COAs with his staff, he determines the accident risk is extremely high because of the likely probability and catastrophic severity of losing vehicles and killing soldiers. His conclusions are based on his experience with and knowledge of fording armored vehicles under the existing conditions of water depth and current speed.

**H - High:** Significant degradation of mission capabilities in terms of the required mission standard, inability to accomplish all parts of the mission, or inability to complete the mission to standard if hazards occur during the mission. *Occasional* to *seldom* probability of catastrophic loss (IC or ID) exists. A *likely* to *occasional* probability exists of a critical loss (IIB or IIC) occurring. *Frequent* probability of *marginal* losses (IIIA) exists.

**Example:** During a preplanned ambush, the leader discovers that the force he intends to ambush has significantly more combat power than his own force can accommodate. He realizes that he could only delay rather than destroy the enemy. He knows his casualty estimates would be very high if the enemy reorganized and counterattacked. He also knows that the size of the enemy force could seriously impact adjacent units conducting a movement to contact. He determines the situation is *high risk* because he estimates (based on his training and experience) there is a likely probability of the enemy reorganizing and counterattacking and the severity of loss to his unit would be critical.

**M - Moderate:** Expected degraded mission capabilities in terms of the required mission standard will have a reduced mission capability if hazards occur during mission. An *unlikely* probability of catastrophic loss (IE) exists. The probability of a *critical* loss is *seldom* (IID). *Marginal* losses occur with a *likely* or *occasional* probability (IIIB or IIIC). A *frequent* probability of negligible (IVA) losses exists.

**Example:** A commander in a defensive position receives a warning order to be prepared to counterattack if the enemy attacks again. He chooses to use pre-positioned ammunition caches to support his defense, as opposed to moving his ammunition resupply forward by truck. He determines that the severity of not having an immediate resupply of ammunition available during the counterattack will have a *critical* impact on his combat power. He realizes that if the enemy forces him to abandon his forward positions, the severity of the loss of his

Figure 2-5. Levels of Risk

ammunition caches will critically impact his combat power. He considers that his unit is deployed in excellent defensive positions. He has repelled two attacks that resulted in the destruction of an estimated 50 percent of the enemy's combat power. He receives information that the probability of the enemy attacking is *likely*, but that the probability of the enemy being reinforced and attacking in overwhelming force is remote (*seldom*). The commander concludes that the risk of conducting a counterattack with limited ammunition is greater than the *moderate* risk of the enemy pushing him back.

**L - Low:** Expected losses have little or no impact on accomplishing the mission. The probability of *critical* loss is *unlikely* (IIE), while that of *marginal* loss is *seldom* (IIID) or *unlikely* (IIIE). The probability of a *negligible* loss is *likely* or *less* (IVB through (IVE).

**Example:** A mechanized task force (TF) conducting a movement to contact in a desert environment is overtaken by nightfall before reaching its limit of advance (LOA). The terrain along the axis of advance is flat and open. Visibility is about 800 meters under a clear sky illuminated by a full moon. Estimates put the enemy, which has been hastily withdrawing for the past three days, at approximately 30 percent strength. Contact has been light with no defensible terrain along the TF's axis. The TF commander considers all the factors. In addition, the TF is 100 percent operational in using night vision devices. The TF commander estimates that it is *unlikely* that his unit will incur losses of *critical* severity by being surprised by the enemy or lose *critical* combat power due to an accident. He estimates the risk to his force in continuing a nighttime movement is *low*.

Figure 2-5. Levels of Risk (continued)