

Better *Safe* Than *Sorry!*



When dealing with ammunition or explosives, it's much better to be **very safe** or you could end up **very sorry**.

A case in point with the M260/M261 rocket launcher: A helicopter crew in Iraq had replaced the right launcher without first downloading all the rockets in the left-side launcher. They were conducting electrical checks on the newly-installed right-side launcher when a rocket fired from the left one. The rocket blasted into a concrete wall 10 feet away. Warhead fragments damaged a Kiowa on the other side of the wall.

It doesn't take much to imagine how easily this negligence could have turned into a fatal accident. If a few soldiers had been standing in the wrong place, several lives would have been lost in an instant.

All that was necessary to prevent this incident was to do it by the book—in this case, Para 4-6 on helicopter safety procedures in the Kiowa's TM 9-1090-214-23&P.

If the crew had done the testing by the book, they would have made sure both launchers were completely unloaded before they did any maintenance or testing.

Doing it by the book is important not only with rocket launchers, but also with all small arms and missile systems. Always make sure the weapon is not loaded before doing anything else.

