

Blackwater Worldwide offers another training solution

MRAP Driver's Safety Course

By Dana C. Richardson

Blackwater Worldwide is concerned about the large number of tactical vehicle accidents and associated injuries and deaths, and is offering a solution. Started as a training provider, Blackwater is using armored personnel carriers to train drivers about to be deployed. Blackwater has developed a course to train military personnel to maneuver heavy patrol vehicles that are prone to rollovers in the chaos of war zones. Thousands of the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles are being used in Iraq and Afghanistan. Their hard shell and design protect occupants, as the trucks sit high on a raised chassis and have V-shaped bottoms shielding their underbellies. The military has warned troops to be careful behind the wheel after five deaths were directly connected to vehicle rollovers. The military has also logged dozens of other accidents with numerous injuries. With a surplus of heavily-armored vehicles Blackwater Worldwide plans to teach MRAP driving skills to improve safety on the rollover-prone vehicles. Jim Sierawski, Vice President of Operations and Training for Blackwater stated, "Heavy patrol vehicles are scarce to use for training because so many are deployed overseas."

The new two day MRAP Drivers Safety Training Course offers standardized basic driver instruction and operating experience common to all MRAP style military vehicles. Curriculum focuses on operability, vehicle capabilities and limitations, common vehicle characteristics and safety. The training course will address the root cause of MRAP accidents; roll-overs, speed issues, and braking issues. The training will also concentrate on climbing, descending, and controlling the vehicle in steep angles of attack and cover the emergency vehicle egress. Sierawski explained, "Participants also will learn how to operate with a run-flat tire, which doesn't immediately deflate, that may be punctured by a bullet; something that's often necessary when traveling through hotspots."

Course Objectives:

Day One:

- Driving Emergency Response (Classroom and Practical in Sedans)
- ABS and Non-ABS braking,
- Straight Line Braking Drills,
- Turning and Braking Drills,
- Braking and Turning Drills,
- Slalom and Multiple Avoidance Driving Drills,
- Instinctive Response Drills (with surprise drills),
- Skid Control on Skid Pad,
- Off Road Recovery,
- City streets and heavy traffic driving,
- Unknown or uncertain Rules of the Road,
- Driving in close proximity and constant movement,
- Driving Beyond Normal Limits (Classroom and Practical),
- High speed driving techniques,
- Minimum visual distance considerations,

- Intersections and Stop Signs,
- Whole Road Concepts,
- Restricted Lane Concepts,
- Cornering Techniques,
- Braking Zones,
- Setting up for the corner, Turning and Braking entering the corner,
- Getting the vehicle pointed and balanced, Exiting the corner under control,
- High Center of Gravity Vehicle Operations,
- Managing Steep Angles of Attack,
- Climbing and Descending

Day Two:

- Operator Introduction to MRAP,
- Drive Train Specifics, Transmission, Transfer Case, Differentials, Geared Hub Assemblies
- Inflation System (CTIS), Run flat procedures,
- MRAP operations on Hard Surface,
- Driving Emergency Response (Classroom and Practical in MRAP),
- Straight Line Braking Drills, Turning and Braking Drills,
- Slalom, Multiple Avoidance Driving Drills,
- Off Road Recovery,
- Skid Control on Skid Pad,
- Driving Beyond Normal Limits (Classroom and Practical),
- High speed driving techniques,
- Minimum visual distance considerations,
- Intersections and Stop Signs,
- Whole Road Concepts, Restricted Lane Concepts,
- Cornering Techniques, Braking Zones,
- Setting up for the corner, Turning and braking entering the corner,
- Getting the vehicle pointed and balanced,
- Exiting the corner under control,
- Night Drive with NVG (optional)

Military leaders have praised the MRAPs for their strong shell that protects U.S. personnel, and thousands of the vehicles are being used in Iraq and Afghanistan. Sierawski explained, “We’re another school to go to, another training option and training solution for the military. They get the same level of training they would in the military.”

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