



Hazing Prevention

Case Study: Hazing

Case of SGT Roach



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Overview

This facilitation guide and accompanying case study have been prepared to assist all leaders who supervise both military and civilian employees. Equal opportunity (EO) and equal employment opportunity (EEO) professionals, practitioners, and leaders can use this guide to review and educate their members on policies, acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, and tactics to eliminate sexual harassment behaviors.

Facilitation Guidance

It is highly encouraged to select facilitators such as EO and (EEO) professionals and practitioners to explore the complex dynamics of real-life situations, identify the issues involved, and utilize tools to address those issues. Facilitators must provide a controlled, safe, and non-attributational environment where individuals will be willing to share their perspectives. Throughout this guide, questions are framed to stimulate thoughts on areas to explore and consider in this process and applicable to the specific topic.

Content and Resources

The case synopsis gives insight into the case, key details, and findings. The case study references section provides additional detailed information relevant to the situation. Below this section, there are additional resources on similar cases that support specific aspects of this case and can be used to promote a more in-depth understanding of the dynamic issues related to sexual harassment and workplace climate.

Facilitation Instructions

1. Before the training:
 - a. Ensure the location and applicable resources (handouts) are prepared.
 - b. Ensure the facilitator is prepared.
 - c. Ensure the audience is prepared.
2. During the training:
 - a. Read the purpose and introduction. Answer any questions from the learners.
 - b. Read the definition of hazing or provide a handout/visual aid of the definition.
 - c. Read the case study.
 - d. Use the group discussion questions to facilitate open dialogue while encouraging independent responses from everyone.
 - e. Use the individual questions with anticipated responses (AR) as an opportunity to include all members in the discussion.
 - f. Conclude the session by summarizing the case study and the main points discussed during the discussion.
3. After the training:



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- a. Conduct a follow-up assessment to determine the training effectiveness:
 - i. What went right?
 - ii. What went wrong?
 - iii. What could be done better next time?
- b. Share the findings with the leadership and revise future training sessions as needed.
- c. Monitor the organization for progress.

Case Study: Hazing

Purpose: The purpose of this case study is to provide critical information for:

- Identifying hazing behaviors
- Understanding the leaders' and individuals' roles in preventing hazing
- Responding to individuals who are involved in situations of hazing
- Highlighting the role that climate and other factors play in hazing and prevention
- Acknowledging how other types of harassment are often involved in hazing
- Applying actionable approaches at the individual and leader levels

Introduction

Case studies are essential for understanding workplace hazing's complexity. Hazing typically results from multiple interconnected factors, and case studies reveal how leaders either perpetuate or prevent these issues while showing which prevention strategies work in real-world contexts.

Case studies examine organizational climate, power dynamics, communication failures, and individual behaviors. This analysis helps us understand hazing's complexities—conflicting interests, ambiguous situations, and varied human emotions—providing tools to create healthier, more supportive work environments.

Hazing's root causes are rarely simple. Permissive organizational climates normalize harmful behaviors, while leaders who condone, ignore, or inadequately address hazing enable its continuation. Power imbalances often blur lines with other harassment forms, leaving targets vulnerable to retaliation. This case study will examine contributing factors and demonstrate how identifying and addressing them can prevent future incidents and improve workplace climate.

Disclaimer:

This training is for awareness and educational purposes only. This case study may evoke feelings or emotions. If anyone experiences any adverse reactions, they should seek professional support. All topics discussed in this session are NOT substitutes for medical advice.



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Definitions

DoDI 1020.03, Change 3. Effective: January 17, 2025 Hazing (military-only)

A form of harassment that includes conduct through which Service members or DoD employees, without a proper military or other governmental purpose, but with a nexus to Military Service, physically or psychologically injure or create a risk of physical or psychological injury to Service members for the purpose of initiation into, admission into, affiliation with, change in status or position within, or continued membership in any military or DoD civilian organization. Hazing can be conducted through the use of electronic devices or communications, and by other means including social media, as well as in person. Hazing is evaluated by a reasonable person standard. Specific examples can be found on page 26 of the [DoD Instruction 1020.03](#).

Hazing does not include properly directed command or organizational activities that serve a proper military or other governmental purpose, or the requisite training activities required to prepare for such activities (e.g., administrative corrective measures, extra military instruction, or command-authorized physical training).

Service members or DoD civilian employees may be responsible for an act of hazing, even if there was actual or implied consent from the victim and regardless of the grade or rank, status, or Service of the victim.

Hazing is prohibited in all circumstances and environments including off-duty or “unofficial” unit functions and settings.

DoDI 1020.04 Change 1. Effective January 17, 2025 Hazing (civilian-only)

A form of harassment that involves conduct, without a proper governmental purpose but with a nexus to employment, intended to physically or psychologically injure or create a risk of physical or psychological injury to a person for the purpose of: Initiation into, admission into, affiliation with, change in status or position within, or a condition for continued membership in any military or DoD organization. Hazing does not include a properly directed command or organizational activities that serve a proper military or other governmental purpose. Hazing can be conducted through the use of electronic devices or communications, and by other means including social media, as well as in person. Hazing is evaluated by a reasonable person standard and includes, but is not limited to, these instances when performed without a proper military or other governmental purpose. Specific examples can be found on page 22 of the [DoD Instruction 1020.04](#).

Other Harassment Behaviors

Other behaviors, including other harassment behaviors and natural human behaviors, are common in cases of hazing. As a result, defining a situation as hazing can sometimes be difficult, as the intension of behaviors can muddle the understanding of what motivated the incident.



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Additionally, hazing behaviors are particularly affected by factors of power differentials within an organization. These differentials can be evident, such as the hierarchical structure of the military, or subtle, such as individual experience and personality characteristics.

Case Synopsis

In 2012, a video made headlines depicting an Army Staff Sergeant, taking a large wooden mallet and hitting a subordinate, SGT Phillip Roach, in the chest as part of a promotion ceremony. The video shows SGT Roach being knocked against the wall behind him by the blow, stepping forward, and then collapsing to the floor and hitting his head on a near-by chair as he fell. The video cuts short, just before SGT Roach hit the floor and suffered a seizure. Reports also indicate that he sustained other injuries from the fall, including a wound on his head that required staples and possible long-term cardiac concerns, according to his doctors.

The act was part of a promotion ceremony, an Army tradition of applying a new rank insignia to a newly promoted personnel member's uniform. It is noted that this is often done by taking the patch, one that attaches to the uniform with Velcro, and applying it with a slap or punch. The Staff Sergeant wielding the mallet, decided to take this tradition to a more extreme level.

The Army took quick action to address the misconduct, charging the perpetrator with an Article 15, a nonjudicial punishment under the Uniformed Code of Military Justice. This reprimand also included a \$1000 fine, transfer to another command, and orders for a written letter of apology. However, some reports indicate that SGT Roach feared backlash for reporting and shortly after the incident was made to participate in duties that are traditionally not common to the rank of an Army Sergeant. SGT Roach was a paratrooper prior to the incident in the Fall of 2012 and was not cleared to fly again until February of 2015.

Group Discussion

*Note: These are suggested questions. Potential responses are included below each question.

1. What behaviors make this a case of hazing versus another harassment behavior?
 - a. Part of a traditional ceremony
 - b. Physically striking another individual (from DoD definition)
2. What may have motivated the perpetrator to engage in this behavior?
 - a. It is possible that the perpetrator felt pressure to escalate the behavior of the traditional ceremony to:
 - b. Create a sense of comradery through humor
 - c. Add shock value to bolster his own reputation
 - d. Since we know that hazing rituals evolve over time, it is possible that the perpetrator felt pressure to make the ceremony unique to him



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3. What are some reasons why the target may have consented to participate in this hazing activity?
 - a. The target may have feared looking weak if they objected to participation
 - b. Objecting to the act may have made the target look like they are not willing to sacrifice to be a part of the group
 - c. Others may have participated without negative consequences, so the target may have accepted that the behavior was “okay” and just part of group membership
4. What were the factors that contributed to the climate?
 - a. The inaction of other Service members (i.e., no bystander intervention)
 - b. Leaders allow hazing behaviors to continue as part of these traditional promotion ceremonies (Referenced articles indicate that slapping or punching the new rank insignia onto personnel is common)

Questions

1. What are some bystander intervention strategies you could use if you were a witness of this type of hazing behavior?

Responses to look for: As a witness, I could stand up and say that this could be dangerous and is not a good idea. Additionally, I might remind the group that physically striking someone when associated with a traditional ceremony is considered hazing and against policy. I could also refuse to participate and leave to go report the behavior.

2. What steps or mitigating strategies do you think could help support a better climate or group cohesion in a situation like what is described in the case study?

Responses to look for: Leaders should be aware of practices and behaviors within their climate that are common points where hazing behaviors may occur. These are times to emphasize adherence to policy standards to protect the psychological and physical safety of all personnel. Leaders can organize specific events outside of promotion ceremonies as complements to the acknowledgment of promotions to emphasize team cohesion and allow an outlet for more fun. For instance, if units know that after a Service member is promoted and receives their new rank insignia that there will be a fun event, less attention may be paid to making the ceremony itself more extreme.

3. If you were the target in this situation, would you have willingly participated? Why or why not?

Responses to look for:

- Yes, I would have felt pressure to be part of the team, and I would have trusted that my leader did not intend to harm me seriously.



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- No, I would have stated that this was dangerous and by earning my new rank I had already proven my dedication to my role in the unit.
4. Do you feel comfortable expressing concerns regarding hazing in your organization? If not, why? If so, what factors help you to feel comfortable expressing concerns?

Responses to look for: I feel comfortable speaking up when I know my chain of command has my back and when I've seen them take concerns seriously in the past. It's also easier when there's a clear process for raising issues without fear of retaliation. But sometimes, I worry about backlash or being seen as not a team player or someone complaining, especially if the culture isn't open to change. Seeing a lack of devotion from leadership to hold those accountable makes me uncomfortable expressing my concerns. Much of it comes down to trust in leadership and my team and if the environment is one where we feel safe to voice concerns.

Conclusion

This case study examined online sexual harassment and how organizational climate and leadership affect outcomes. Positive leadership and supportive environments are essential for prevention and response. Sexual harassment continues when perpetrators believe their actions are acceptable or won't face consequences. Leaders must stay aware of team behavior, provide training, and foster accountability. Creating a safe, respectful workplace benefits the entire organization.



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References

*Note: Each reference below contains pieces of this story. Read through them all to ensure you have the entire picture.

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Handout

1. What are some bystander intervention strategies you could use if you were a witness of this type of hazing behavior?
2. What steps or mitigating strategies do you think could help support a better climate or group cohesion in a situation like what is described in the case study?
3. If you were the target in this situation, would you have willingly participated? Why or why not?
4. Do you feel comfortable expressing concerns regarding hazing in your organization? If not, why? If so, what factors help you to feel comfortable expressing concerns?