



What Are You Doing About It?

The 101 Critical Days of Summer are almost upon us and I want to share some insights and accident trend analysis, for awareness, that may help make this a more enjoyable and safer season. To date, off-duty accidents represent nearly 75 percent of all Army accidents we have suffered so far this year. If our five-year accident trend remains consistent, we can expect to endure the loss of over 200 Soldiers before the end of this fiscal year! The loss of just one Soldier deprives us of a friend or peer, however, many others also endure pain because this Soldier was someone's father, mother, sister, brother, son or daughter. I promise you, not a day goes by when I and those here at the safety center are not trying to think of a way to prevent accidental losses. So my question to you - What are YOU doing about it? How many losses do you have to read about or how many close-calls do you have to witness before you step up and do something to prevent these needless deaths? There are three areas responsible for more than two-thirds of all off-duty Army accidents; privately-owned vehicles (POVs), drowning and fatigue.

POV accidents with contributing factors such as speed coupled with loss of control, account for a large percentage of all Army accidents. Did you know that something as trivial as one-quarter of an inch could possibly save your life? One-quarter of an inch roughly equates to 15 to 20 mph in the average American car; however, one-quarter of an inch can be 40 to 50 mph on a motorcycle, depending on the gear you are in. Say you just purchased a vehicle. Beware - recent studies indicate moving from a sedan to SUV or cruiser to sportbike can increase your likelihood of an accident. Experience doesn't always transfer; cruisers versus sportbikes are as different as sedans versus sport utility vehicles (SUVs). You may find you can easily overdrive the capabilities of the machine, or rather, the machine possesses capabilities exceeding your experience level. The Army experienced 15 drowning accidents last fiscal year. Unfortunately, that total is more than the two previous years combined. While several different factors played a part in these losses, one factor is present in all but two of these accidents - another person's presence. From the time we're old enough to enter the water, most of us are taught not to eat before you swim and never go into the water by yourself. While it is not clear if either of these adages could have made a difference in many of these accidents, it is clear that in some maybe they could have. The second common factor present, in more than 50 percent of these accidents was the proximity of land. Fact - standing on or in close proximity to land may lead to overconfidence or a false sense of security around water. Even the best swimmer may lose their life when thrust into a situation where currents and hypothermia are present, even with a personal floatation device.

Fatigue is present more often than alcohol in off-duty accidents. Often overlooked and even less understood, over the course of the last 10 years, fatigue played a factor in claiming an average of 75 lives a year.

As Soldiers and professionals, we often push ourselves by burning the candle at both ends, especially during those few precious opportunities when we can get away and relax. Rest cycles are often METT-T driven when operating in a deployed environment. In addition to Leaders, Soldiers are responsible for the amount of rest they get while not deployed.

These are demanding times for our Army; but a little planning and forethought will hopefully lead you and your formation through a safe and enjoyable 101 Critical Days of Summer.

Army Safe is Army Strong!

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