



## Keeping safety in sight

The end of summer is drawing near, and many of our Soldiers and Families will be busy these next few weeks with last-minute vacation plans, back-to-school activities or, for some, preparations for another rotation to theater. During these hectic days, every minute counts — but we can't let our guard down when it comes to safety.

It's a well-known fact that off-duty vehicle crashes claim more of our Soldiers every year than any other accident cause, and this year's trend is no exception. Over the four-day Memorial Day weekend, our Army lost five Soldiers to off-duty vehicle accidents: three on motorcycles, one in a pickup truck and one on an all-terrain vehicle. Unfortunately, our other trend, indiscipline, was a primary factor in these accidents as well, specifically regarding speed and failure to wear seat belts or personal protective equipment.

As important as POV accident reduction is, however, we can't lose sight of the often subtle hazards that inevitably claim a few Soldiers annually. It's hard to believe that as we near the end of fiscal 2010, more Soldiers have died in sports accidents than in all of 2009. We've also seen an increase in fatal pedestrian accidents this year, the last occurring when a Soldier on the way to sick call stepped in front of a vehicle in a parking lot. And among other accidents, we've lost five Soldiers to drowning, one in a fall while hiking and two to privately owned weapons discharges. Such uncommon accidents are happening in theater too. Just recently, we experienced a tragic accident when a Soldier who was installing flooring in a dining facility suffered fatal burns after the glue he was working with caught fire. Additionally, three Soldiers have died from crush injuries this fiscal year, with two pinned between tactical vehicles and the third killed when a rolling gate malfunctioned and fell on top of him.

In our Army, a loss is a loss, no matter how it happens. While we will continue to work hard through Leader and Family engagement to permanently reduce POV accidents, we must consider just as seriously the other hazards that can take our Soldiers out of the fight. There's no such thing as a mundane mission or just another day off — safety is a full-time responsibility, and it's our job to protect the Soldiers entrusted to our care.

There are several ways we can remain vigilant in our fight against all accidents, even those that seem the most unlikely. First, always listen to what your Soldiers are saying. The most valuable eyes and ears you have are the Soldiers who work side by side every day and the NCOs who lead them. If someone is taking unnecessary risks, it's almost certain somebody else knows. Never underestimate the creativity of your Soldiers either; they just might have a solution for your most frustrating safety problems. Take an interest in everything your Soldiers are doing, and foster a culture where communication flows freely and composite risk management is the first block checked before a team heads out on a mission or the unit leaves for the weekend.

Another vital resource for Leaders is the Army Readiness Assessment Program (ARAP). No matter how hard they try, commanders are often unaware of every hazard their Soldiers face. Through ARAP's anonymous and confidential surveys and follow-up briefings, commanders can get a true sense of their Soldiers' concerns and their unit's safety climate. The program continues to receive overwhelmingly positive feedback from commanders and has become a highly trusted and valuable tool for our Army's Leaders.

Finally, I encourage you to take advantage of the expertise of the safety professionals within your command. All our Army's safety personnel — Civilians, aviation safety officers and additional duty safety officers — have been trained to help you reduce risk and fight accidents. They also have access to our most up-to-date safety information, including preliminary loss reports and daily accident statistics that break down current fatality data by category and duty status. Their knowledge is power for both you and your Soldiers.

Oftentimes in safety, the devil truly is in the details. Look out for the subtle hazards, and remember that no risk is ever too small to merit consideration. Thank you for what you do every day for our Soldiers, Families and Civilians!

Army Safe is Army Strong!

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

WILLIAM T. WOLF  
Brigadier General, USA  
Commanding