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U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

FROM THE COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR

ARMY SAFE IS ARMY STRONG



Do as I Do

Leadership is one of the most difficult jobs on the planet, especially in an Army that's been at war more than a decade. The overwhelming majority of our Leaders have done a great job managing the many challenges that have come before them: multiple deployments, doing more with less and preparing for whatever missions their Soldiers might be called to execute. In fact, excellent leadership is at the very heart of our recent success in reducing on-duty accidents to one of the lowest levels ever recorded.

Even so, there are always those Leaders who defy the very standards they're supposed to enforce. Leading by the example of "do as I say, not as I do" is not leadership — it's indiscipline, plain and simple! These Leaders aren't doing their part and either don't realize or don't care that what their Soldiers see them doing has a much greater impact than what they say to them. This mindset is irresponsible at best and fatal at worst, and we can't sit back and hope wayward Leaders will change on their own.

Fatal motorcycle accidents illustrate this point. During fiscal 2011, Leaders at the grade of E5 to O4 comprised 64 percent of all motorcycle-related deaths. Several crashes involved speeds of 90 mph or greater, and a lack of personal protective equipment was reported in many others. What kind of message does this behavior send to young and impressionable Soldiers? Junior Leaders are critical in our fight against preventable accidents, but when they disregard the standard and act recklessly, it sets a negative precedent that affects unit personnel on and off duty.

Curbing this problem requires decisive action now from Leaders from the squad up. Indiscipline is never excusable, and we have to make sure our subordinates — and sometimes even our seniors — are setting and maintaining the highest possible standards. Rank doesn't matter when it comes to safety; no Soldier is more or less accountable than another, and we should foster a culture where corrective actions may be made without fear of retribution.

Knowing our people and setting the standard are what leadership is all about. Dropping in unexpectedly and observing your junior Leaders interact with their Soldiers takes only a few minutes and provides a priceless look into unit dynamics. Talk with your Soldiers and really listen to their concerns. Someone always knows when a Soldier is taking unnecessary risks, but you'll never find out if you don't ask. When it comes to safety, being in the know is what really counts!

Nothing can replace face time with Soldiers, but I firmly believe the Army Readiness Assessment Program is an essential tool for Leaders. It's an eye-opening experience, and no other survey offers more immediate or candid feedback on critical issues linked to Soldier safety, including the unit's leading indicators for potential loss or mishaps. More than one million

responses have been logged thus far through ARAP, and it continues to pay great dividends for commanders and Soldiers at all levels. I've been sold on ARAP for years, and I encourage you to sign up your unit if you haven't already.

The holidays and the upcoming new year provide a perfect opportunity to renew our commitment to safety. Look inward at how your behavior and leadership style affects others and ensure your subordinate Leaders do the same. The first life we save should be our own — that's the best possible example we can set for the Soldiers counting on us every day. I wish you all a safe and blessed holiday season, and I'll see you in 2012!

Army Safe is Army Strong!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard D. Stidley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R".

Rick Stidley
Command Sergeant Major
U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center