



## Do You Get It?

Before I came to the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center late last year, I thought I knew a lot about Soldiers and how they think and operate. But as I've traveled throughout our Army since then, I've come to realize there's always more to learn about the men and women we lead every day.

It's always a pleasure to visit a post and hear stories about Soldiers who are out there doing the right things every day and saving lives in the process. And that's one of the most important lessons I've received — most Soldiers want to do their best and do it safely. For example, I was recently in Germany giving a pre-deployment safety briefing and had the opportunity to spend some time with 10 different groups of Soldiers from the same unit. Both they and their leadership were talking the same things, including a top-five list of safety concerns for the upcoming rotation to theater. Every Soldier I spoke with understood these hazards and could explain them to me clearly and without hesitation. These Soldiers clearly “got it” that safety can mean the difference between a successful deployment and one tragically marred by accidental fatalities.

There are always a few Soldiers out there, however, who just don't get it. I'm talking about those Soldiers who, despite knowing what to do, continue to willfully disregard the standard both on and off duty, whether it's speeding, not wearing seat belts, restraint systems or personal protective equipment, drinking and driving, and the list goes on. The price for this reckless behavior is often high, as several of this summer's accidents have shown. We experienced an especially tough couple of weeks when three Soldiers died in privately owned vehicle rollovers because they weren't buckled up, even as their belted passengers escaped serious injury. Around the same time, we lost another Soldier — also unrestrained — in an on-duty HMMWV rollover.

No matter how many of these reports we receive, I'm always surprised at the disregard for safety some Soldiers and even Leaders display. How many times have you been off post, oftentimes just right outside the gate, and seen Soldiers without their seat belts or helmets or behaving in other undisciplined ways? And how often have you seen mission-bound vehicle crews skip pre-combat checks, inspections and rehearsals in the name of saving a little time? I've seen it a lot, at every installation I've been assigned to and every theater I've been in. But the most important question is how many times have you done something about it?

Obviously, we've got to get at the heart of these issues — and that's where we, as Leaders, enter the picture. It's our job to pay attention to the details, and when we see Soldiers disregarding the standard, it's our responsibility to correct them. It's our duty to ask them why they're being negligent and help them see the potentially deadly consequences of their actions. This means talking and listening by both you and your Soldiers, not just you barking orders and them agreeing to follow. The same is true for the random Soldiers you might correct for unsafe behavior on any given day. Take their name and unit information, and follow up with them to let them know you care about their well-being. You never know what kind of leadership they have in their formations, so don't underestimate the positive influence you can have today.

Opening the flow of communication doesn't have to be hard, and, fortunately, there are tools out there to help you reach your Soldiers. One of these is the BOSS Safety Factor. The USACR/Safety Center and BOSS program have updated the original product to be even better for the upcoming year. The updated kit, which includes a safety presentation that features video clips from some of today's top comedians taking a humorous look at the hazards of

Army life, will be formally launched Oct. 1 at <https://safety.army.mil>. Take a look and let us know what you think — your feedback helps us provide you the tools you need.

Finally, take some time to recognize the Soldiers in your ranks who are doing a great job for safety. Through the end of this month, GEICO will accept nominations for its Military Service Awards Program, which highlights the contributions of service members in accident prevention. One enlisted member from each of the service branches will be honored, so make sure your safety warriors have a chance at the prize.

As the seasons change and we move into the new fiscal year, make safety a priority for you and your Soldiers. Take corrective action when necessary, and always let them know you care. Thanks for what you do every day, and remember Army Safe is Army Strong!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Eyer". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Michael Eyer  
Command Sergeant Major