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U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

FROM THE COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR

ARMY SAFE IS ARMY STRONG



Renewed Engagement for a New Year

During the past year, I've had the pleasure to visit and talk with Soldiers all over the world. It's always great to get out and learn what's really going on with the men and women who make up the backbone of our Army. Meeting each of them and hearing their personal stories only reinforces my commitment to keeping them safe every day, both on and off duty.

As we begin the new fiscal year, I ask that you, too, reaffirm your commitment to Soldier safety. We closed fiscal 2010 with a slight increase in fatalities over the previous year's numbers, and we have to keep in mind the loss of every Soldier is tragic. We shortchange our Soldiers if we think simply sustaining numbers from year to year is good enough, because their lives aren't part of a numbers game. Instead, we must do everything we can to keep all our Soldiers safe and in the fight—and that process begins with effective and engaged leadership at the first-line level.

No leaders have more influence over their Soldiers than immediate supervisors, and there are no leaders Soldiers look to more for advice. If there's one thing our 2010 statistics show, it's that we have a continuing need for leaders at all levels, and especially our first-line leaders, to be engaged with their Soldiers every day. We can't afford lapses in leadership influence, nor should we tolerate them because engagement is easily doable for every leader and NCO. It's a matter of making the time to truly know our Soldiers, listening to what they have to say and providing regular counseling sessions not as punishment, but as a way to bring the unit together to address common concerns and build the team around shared safety goals.

We have to keep in mind that engaged leadership doesn't end with Soldiers; rather, it extends to Family members as well. Spouses are closer to their Soldiers than anyone else, and they can provide valuable input to help you build the most effective safety program possible. First-line leaders and NCOs have to keep Families informed, however, and this means sharing what you know and encouraging them to get involved in the safety process. Family networks are a great way to share information and pass the latest news on to larger audiences, so take advantage of this leverage and let them know you appreciate their efforts for Soldier safety.

The last piece of leader engagement involves empowering every Soldier, regardless of rank, to be a safety leader for his or her battle buddies. Soldiers go through a lot together and forge incredibly strong bonds through shared experiences. We have to teach them that the Warrior Ethos means looking out for one another around the clock, even when the mission or duty day ends. Again, this begins with first-line leaders and NCOs taking the time to mentor and grow their Soldiers into safe, responsible warriors on the battlefield and off.

Fortunately, there are plenty of good examples of engaged leadership in our Army. Numerous Motorcycle Mentorship Programs at stateside and overseas installations have been particularly

successful due to command involvement and influence. Effective leadership when an accident happens has also been shown to have a positive impact on unit safety, especially when leaders ensure reporting requirements are followed and results from investigations are shared with all Soldiers to build awareness. And at the first-line level, engaged leaders are doing the right things and saving lives every day, both in theater and at home. I recently had the privilege of meeting one junior leader who understands that using influence wisely and leading by example does save lives, sometimes even your own.

This young sergeant was the truck commander of a Maxxpro MRAP on a mission in Afghanistan when the vehicle rolled over after coming into contact with another truck that swerved to avoid a third vehicle. The sergeant, acting as a good TC, had ensured his crew and passengers wore their proper personal protective equipment, buckled their restraint systems and properly secured all loose equipment before the truck left the wire. And although he lost a foot in the accident, his actions ensured what could have been a tragic event for everyone involved ended with only minor injuries to his crew and a recoverable injury for himself. I was amazed by his positive attitude and eagerness to get back to the business of safely leading his troops.

This leader and others like him provide a fantastic example for their Soldiers to follow every day. Not every leader out there, however, sets quite the same standard, as our motorcycle fatalities continue to show. During fiscal 2010, 73 percent of all Soldiers killed on motorcycles were leaders at the rank of E5 to O3. This figure is absolutely unacceptable—as leaders, it's our responsibility to set the example for our Soldiers every minute of every day, on duty and off. We have to take care of ourselves to be effective, and we have to not only expect but also live by the highest standards possible to gain the respect of the Soldiers entrusted to us.

Moving forward into the new year, I encourage you to take a hard look at where you are as a leader and find new ways to engage with your Soldiers. A great way to get involved with the single Soldiers in your unit is the new and improved BOSS Safety Factor, a training package that includes media products outlining our Army's four most common risk-taking personalities and a briefing-ready safety presentation that features video clips from comedians taking a humorous look at the hazards of Army life. If you haven't already, I also recommend sharing the 2010 Peer to Peer contest videos with your Soldiers. These brief films were made by Soldiers, for Soldiers, and are not only hilarious, but also thought provoking. Stay tuned to the USACR/Safety Center website, <https://safety.army.mil>, for these and additional new products and contests throughout the year.

Thank you for what you do every day. Leading isn't an easy job, but it's an immensely rewarding one. Stay engaged, stay safe and stay Army Strong!



Michael Eyer
Command Sergeant Major
U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center