



Media Release

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Army Addresses Motorcycle Deaths in Hawaii

WHEELER ARMY AIR FIELD, Hawaii –U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii launches its inaugural advanced motorcycle training course at Wheeler Army Airfield, August 17-20. The course is part of a pilot program, developed by the garrison's Installation Safety Office, in an effort to reduce the number of motorcycle-related fatalities for Soldiers stationed in Hawaii.

Hawaii's annual motorcycle death toll has more than doubled during the last 11 years, and ranks 20th nationally in the number of motorcycle accidents per 100,000 riders. With four months remaining, the state has nearly surpassed last year's total of 29.

"When you consider that 80 percent of Army motorcycle accidents in 2008 and 2009 did not involve other vehicles, one can conclude that a different approach to motorcycle training is needed, one that improves driving techniques for Soldiers and is conducted under realistic riding conditions," said Sammy Houseberg, director of Installation Safety. "Riders need to be prepared for what they would expect to encounter on the H-1 or H-2 freeways during peak driving times."

Most motorcycle training courses provide classroom instruction concluding in practice rides through small obstacle courses, with riders seldom reaching speeds more than 30 mph.

"The new training course goes beyond anything previously offered by the Army," said William Maxwell, safety specialist and program manager. "Soldiers in this course will receive advanced instruction in speed control, as well as curve, swerve and quick-stop navigation on a realistic driving course at realistic speeds, 35-60 miles per hour." The program's emphasis is to "Train as You Ride," with Soldiers learning more complex techniques often found lacking in riders involved in accidents.

The Army has called in experts from the California Superbike School in Los Angeles to assist in the training. The school has trained more than 100,000 street riders and 15 Superbike champions from the United States, Australia and Europe, and plans to train over 300 Soldiers in safe motorcycle handling as part of the pilot program.

In order to provide instruction at highway speeds, without the dangers of highway traffic hazards, organizers will use the mile-long runways at Wheeler Army Airfield.

“We recently welcomed over 4,500 soldiers home from Iraq, and look forward to that same number returning in the coming months,” said Col. Matthew T. Margotta, commander of U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii. “They have done all that has been asked of them to keep America safe, and the Army is committed to doing all that it can to keep them safe on our highways now that they’re home.”

MEDIA NOTE: Media requesting more information should contact Loran Doane, Media Relations chief, U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii Public Affairs at (808) 656-3157 or preferred cell (317) 847-2222.