



Maintaining the Momentum

Fall is a time of change — forests transformed with brilliant hues of orange and gold, the hot, humid days of summer giving way to crisp autumn air and the promise of upcoming holidays and a new year just ahead. It's also the time of year we traditionally change command at the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center, and I'll be handing over responsibilities as commanding general and director of Army safety later this month. But before I go, I'd like to share how proud I am of the superb job each of you has done for safety during my tenure here.

I came to the USACR/Safety Center just as our Army was making a remarkable turnaround in safety performance. Between fiscal 2005 and fiscal 2008, accidental fatalities fell nearly 30 percent even as the OPTEMPO in theater hit record highs. That incredible momentum continued into 2009 and 2010, when fatal accidents dropped to their lowest level since September 2001. And while it will be several weeks before fiscal 2011 totals are final, projections show we should be on par with the past two years.

What all of you — our Leaders, Soldiers, Family members and Civilians — have accomplished is something unprecedented in our Army's history: not just simply reducing, but slashing accidental fatalities during a time of war. We're getting better and better as an Army at engagement and standards enforcement, the two most crucial elements of safety. This is especially true on duty, where we expect double-digit reductions in most accident categories for this fiscal year. Considering the demands of two separate conflicts and the millions of duty hours performed both in theater and in garrison these past 10 years, that's truly outstanding news.

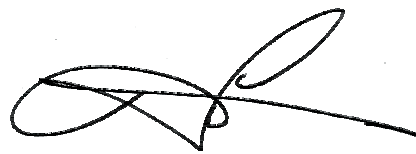
Off-duty safety remains our biggest challenge — as it has been for almost 40 years — and I encourage you to continue engaging with your Soldiers and their Family members. It's hard to enforce standards when your Soldiers aren't with you, and that's why we have to continually stress the importance of discipline and the Warrior Ethos during and after the duty day. Additionally, we must include Family members in our safety programs. No one knows a Soldier better than his or her parents or spouse, and they're the best advocates we have for safety off duty. It all goes back to fostering a holistic safety culture and instilling a safe lifestyle Soldiers carry with them wherever they go and whatever their activity.

While people are the most important tool in our safety arsenal, we can't forget about the wonderful programs that have proven effective during the past several years. Privately owned vehicle and motorcycle crashes remain the No. 1 accidental killer of our Soldiers, but we have made tremendous gains with programs like the Motorcycle Mentorship Program, the Motorcycle Progressive Training Model and Remedial Driver's Training. Commanders have the ultimate responsibility for implementing and growing programs like these, and I ask that you do everything possible to make them succeed.

Finally, please continue working with your young Soldiers to develop them into tomorrow's safety Leaders. Not that long ago, safety was a compliance-based, check-the-block requirement that was often viewed as an afterthought rather than a priority. That mindset is rapidly changing, and we now have a perfect opportunity to make safety a career-long and life-long value for the many thousands of young men and women in our ranks today. Engage with them, listen to them and learn from them — they are our Army's present and future, and we owe them the safest start possible.

Through a decade of conflict and the hardships of wartime service, each of you has proven there's no force on earth that can match the dedication and integrity of this great Army Team. We've come a long way because of you, and I look forward to hearing of even more success in the months and years ahead. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve alongside you, and you have my heartfelt thanks and eternal gratitude for everything you do to keep our Soldiers, Families and Civilians safe and ready for the fight.

Army Safe is Army Strong!

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

WILLIAM T. WOLF
BRIGADIER GENERAL, USA
COMMANDING