



Playing the game

To the outside observer, safety may seem like a numbers game of statistics and comparisons. But those of us in Army safety know those numbers represent something very real: Soldiers who have died in accidents and will never return to their units or Families. We've been fortunate during the past several years that our numbers have been on a downward trajectory — smaller totals mean good news for the Soldiers, Family members and Civilians doing our Army's hard work every day. Engaged leadership has paid dividends for the safety and well being of our force, and Soldiers are getting better and better at taking care of each other both on the front line and at home.

Numbers don't lie, however, and there's no doubt fiscal 2012 got off to a rough start for safety. At the close of the first quarter, accidental fatalities were up 6 percent from the same timeframe a year before. To put that statistic in perspective, think about a squad of Soldiers, then imagine half of them gone in an instant. That's approximately how many more lives our Army lost from one year to the next in just a single quarter, and that's a number none of us should be willing to accept.

I firmly believe this setback is temporary, an anomaly we will correct quickly and decisively by doing what we know works — engaging with our Soldiers. From the squad up, Leaders should be talking to their Soldiers about everything that can take them out of the fight, starting with indiscipline behind the wheel of privately owned vehicles. As tragic as the first quarter's POV accidents are, they provide valuable lessons learned on issues like speed, seat belts and drunk driving. Like the rest of us, nearly every Soldier in our formations has acted recklessly on the road at one time or another, taking the same risks as their fallen peers but escaping serious harm.

Talking through recent accidents with your Soldiers offers them the opportunity to take a hard look at themselves and their mistakes, to see how close they have come to disaster and find ways to curb risky driving behaviors and ultimately save lives. Especially critical are junior Leaders — each of you must take an active interest in your Soldiers' off-duty activities and encourage an open-door policy regarding safety concerns. Engagement will become increasingly important in the coming weeks, as

winter transitions to spring and Soldiers spend more and more time on the road in their POVs and on their motorcycles.

If you aren't already subscribed, the Army's Preliminary Loss Reports are a great engagement tool available to Leaders and safety personnel. Released after a fatal accident is reported to the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center, each PLR contains facts, risk mitigation tips and suggested engagement techniques to enhance the dialogue between you and your Soldiers. You can begin receiving PLRs by email today by filling out a simple form available on the USACR/Safety Center website, <https://safety.army.mil> <<https://safety.army.mil/>> . Also be sure to check out the other tools available on the site, including the recently updated Individual and Battle Buddy Risk Assessments. These printable cards are designed to help Soldiers identify factors that could put them or their buddies at risk for an accident and include resources where Soldiers can seek assistance. The assessments are accessible via the "Leader's Corner" tab at the bottom of the USACR/Safety Center home page.

Our Army has come a long way in doing things right and doing things safely. It's due to our entire team — Leaders, Soldiers, Families and Civilians — working together to save lives. By staying focused and engaged, we can overcome our first quarter losses and make 2012 our safest year yet. In our business, there's no better number to be at than zero — and that's a goal we can all stand behind!

Army Safe is Army Strong!

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

William T. Wolf
Brigadier General, USA
Director of Army Safety