



What's your plan for 2012?

Planning is one of the things we do most as Leaders — we plan for missions, training and any number of other events throughout the year. Recent accident statistics show we're getting better and better at planning for risk as well. And if you haven't started planning for the hazards your Soldiers might face in the months ahead, the new year is a perfect time to begin.

Accident reports from past Januarys indicate several issues Leaders should be focusing on with their Soldiers. Not surprisingly, the most critical area of concern is privately owned vehicle safety. From 2007 to 2011, an average of nearly five Soldiers died in POV crashes during the first month of the new year. Although that number is somewhat lower than we typically experience during spring and summer, the last months of winter are no time for Leaders to lose sight of their high-risk Soldiers. The combination of inclement weather and risky driving behaviors like speeding, drinking and driving and failure to wear seat belts is deadly any time of year, but especially in winter when black ice and other hazards are common on roadways across the United States and overseas.

Statistics also show that motorcycle fatalities happen year-round. During the 2007-2011 timeframe, 17 Soldiers were killed in motorcycle accidents occurring in January or February. That number might seem counterintuitive given the general perception that motorcycle riding is a warm-weather activity. However, all but one of those accidents happened in the Deep South or Southwest — regions that typically experience mild winters and where hundreds of thousands of Soldiers are stationed. Leaders at installations in more congenial climates must continually engage with their Soldiers on both the joys and hazards of motorcycle riding, especially if they themselves are riders. Motorcycle mentorship programs are thriving on many of the large installations in these areas, so I encourage Leaders who aren't involved in an MMP to join one nearby or establish an original charter for their unit.

Leaders also can't forget about new "toys" their Soldiers might have received as holiday gifts. Many well-intentioned spouses and parents excitedly purchase big-ticket items like firearms and all-terrain vehicles for their Soldiers, forgetting that a lack of training and experience can result in devastating accidents. Approximately one Soldier died in negligent discharge incidents immediately following the holidays every year during the past five years, and alcohol use was confirmed in at least three of those accidents. Leaders should ensure Soldiers receiving gifts like weapons, ATVs or dirt bikes complete proper training and gain experience in controlled instructional environments through classes offered on post or by a reputable training organization off the installation.

The USACR/Safety Center stands ready to help Leaders in any way possible. We're midway through the annual Safe Fall/Winter Campaign, which contains numerous multimedia tools ideal for safety boards, unit publications and safety briefs. The POV/POM Toolbox, located along with the MMP site on the POV Safety home page at <https://safety.army.mil>, is an invaluable resource for Leaders looking to engage with and educate their Soldiers on vehicle and motorcycle safety. The Firearms Safety Techniques challenge, an interactive tool that simulates weapons handling in a variety of scenarios, is another great tool available on our website. While none of these products takes the place of hands-on training or engagement, they do provide a fantastic start to effective safety programs.

You'll see in our fiscal 2011 wrap-up article on page 22 of this issue that our Army just finished another positive year for safety, but we cannot afford to rest. Leaders and Soldiers staying engaged are the primary reason for these positive results, and I ask for your continued engagement. Thank you all for what you do every day — your hard work shows in the face of every healthy, safe Soldier in your formations. Keep up the great work, and I look forward to seeing what 2012 brings!

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
Commanding