



BRIEF SMART

It's March, and that means it's time for another talk about driving safety. As a leader, you know that's just what your Soldiers want to hear, right? Few things elicit more groans from Soldiers than the mandatory safety brief. I'm of the belief, however, that since safety briefings are required, we might as well make them useful and enjoyable experiences.

Getting the message across in safety briefings, but keeping it fun, isn't hard. For the most part, Soldiers really aren't a tough crowd. They share common general experiences and get what it's like to be in the Army today. That means you don't have to be a master comedian or mind reader to relate to them. All safety briefs do need to have a few things in common, though.

First, have an idea of what you want to discuss, but keep the floor open for conversation — and humor. Drinking, driving and motorcycles should always be part of your briefs, but you'll want to cover those things unique to your local area too, like water safety if a lake or beach is nearby. It's also possible your Soldiers will come up with issues you haven't thought of yet. It's important to give them the opportunity to identify their own concerns and talk about solutions amongst themselves. This interaction makes them an active part of the safety process, rather than a passive participant in a top-down event.

Second, keep your safety briefings relevant to not only what your Soldiers are doing, but what's happening in Army accidents in general. Indiscipline is a huge topic in safety right now, and chances are at least a few of your Soldiers are making unwise decisions off duty. As an engaged leader, you should know who they are, but everyone could benefit from a discussion on the subject. Even your most straight-laced Soldiers are bound to be tempted by indiscipline sometime, and it's better they go into the situation ready to make smart choices. The USACR/Safety Center's preliminary loss reports, which detail every fatal accident in the Army and link to outside resources like news reports and obituaries, are a very effective tool for reinforcing the negative effects of indiscipline. Few things speak more clearly to Soldiers than real-world examples of how one bad decision led to the end for someone just like them.

Third, don't use safety briefings as a tattle session. No one should be standing around with a clipboard taking notes about who's doing what wrong, nor should that time be used for punitive action. Keep the atmosphere light enough that your Soldiers will talk, with both you and their buddies, about how to stay safe during the weekend. Peer-to-peer mentoring is crucial in safety, because you won't be hanging out with your Soldiers during their down time; they'll be around each other! We have to keep the conversation open so when they're out on their own, they continue it as a group.

Finally, think beyond the typical safety brief. Just because your unit's always done their briefings a certain way doesn't make it right. Today's Soldiers won't necessarily relate to what worked for us when we were young. Keep your briefings fresh, and remember the "brief" — no one wants to sit through a long safety lecture. If you're conducting yours effectively, safety briefs shouldn't take too much time away from the job or your Soldiers getting out the door for the weekend. If you haven't already, check out the BOSS Safety Awareness Presentation, available on the USACR/Safety Center website at <https://safety.army.mil>. This is a great tool that incorporates humor into traditional safety topics and is sure to generate discussion among your team. We also just released the online edition of the Army Safe Spring Campaign, which includes feature articles and posters to share with your Soldiers.

Remember that spring is when we'll start seeing the creep in driving and motorcycle fatalities. Ensure your Soldiers are current on their training and have adequate personal protective equipment before they hit the road. Their safety is our business, so don't be afraid to be in their business on these critical issues.

Thanks for all you do every day, and I hope you have a wonderful spring!

Army Safe is Army Strong!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Richard D. Stidley'.

RICK STIDLEY

Command Sergeant Major

U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center