



Moments matter, seconds count

You never know what Mother Nature has in store: After what seemed like an endless winter, it appears we've skipped over spring and plunged straight into summer! I'm sure it's a welcome change for our Soldiers, but the short seasonal transition has put many of us leaders at a disadvantage. Since we haven't had the opportunity to ease our Soldiers into the summer mindset, we have to do like the weather and jump headfirst into our seasonal safety programs. With motorcycle and water fatalities already on the rise this year, we can't afford to delay — Soldiers are eager to get outside, and some of them may not be ready for the usual challenges summer brings.

I thought about this a lot during a recent trip to my hometown in Florida. Several local children drowned in swimming pools in just the few short weeks I was there, reminding me that tragedy can strike in mere moments. As adults, we have a tendency to turn our backs when it's "only" three feet of water or we're distracted by any number of things when we should be watching our kids. I should know, because it's happened to me. When my youngest daughter was about 5 years old, we were lounging by the pool at Shades of Green at Walt Disney World when she suddenly jumped into the water in front of us, knowing she couldn't swim. It still gives me chills to think about what could've happened if we hadn't been right there or weren't paying closer attention to what she was doing. Moments matter, and in safety, seconds count more than you know.

That's what I'd like to see our leaders emphasize this summer: Bad things can happen to good people, so take time to reflect before you execute. It takes just a second for a car to pull in front of a Soldier riding his motorcycle; one beer is one too many when you're boating or skiing at the lake. Seemingly insignificant decisions can turn a life upside down or end it completely, so we owe it to ourselves and each other to think through our plans before we act on them. By staying safe, we make our own luck instead of relying on the very bad gamble that fate will see us through.

June is National Safety Month, and I encourage all of you to take this time to prepare your Soldiers for the summer ahead. It's no coincidence our Army observes this month just as summer kicks off, since this is historically one of the deadliest times of year for Soldiers off duty. And this year, impatience could take an even greater toll if we don't get ahead of the curve. The USACRC/Safety Center has already released its annual Army Safe Summer Campaign and will post a separate effort just for National Safety Month June 1 at <https://safety.army.mil>. These campaigns provide good information based on Armywide trends, but you know specifically what's happening in your formations. Use our materials and your knowledge as starting points to build safety programs that meet your Soldiers' needs and will see them through summer safely.

If we think positively and act responsibly, our Soldiers will too, adding up to a fun summer for both them and us. No one wants to see a preventable fatality, and putting in the time now helps ensure your unit won't be touched by tragedy. Remember, it takes only a moment for everything to change, so commit to safety from this moment forward. There's nothing wrong with play, as long as you always play it safe.

Army Safe is Army Strong!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Leeford C. Cain'.

Leeford C. Cain
Command Sergeant Major
U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center