



U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS CENTER

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Army to observe Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month

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The Army will continue its annual observance of national Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month this May, giving leaders and Soldiers an extended opportunity to prepare for the riding season ahead.

The month, sponsored each year by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, comes at a good time for the Army — motorcycle fatalities were down 15 percent at the end of fiscal 2014 from the previous year and fell even further during the first two quarters of 2015. Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Farnsworth, director of Army Safety and commanding general, U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center, said leaders can use this year's observance to ward off complacency among their Soldier riders.

"We're obviously proud of the work our Soldiers are doing to reduce motorcycle losses," he said. "But we don't want to see them scale back their efforts just because everything is going well. This progress is because leaders, mentors and riders were vigilant, and that needs to continue."

Lt. Col. Joseph Harvey, director of the USACRC's Driving Directorate, said many leaders throughout the Army cannot afford to wait for May to begin their motorcycle safety initiatives.

"Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month happens just as spring is transitioning to summer in much of the continental United States," he said. "While that might be ideal timing for leaders at northern or western installations, riders in southern or desert locations have been riding for months now, if not all year.

"Dedicating an entire month to motorcycle safety is a great thing, but it really has to be a year-round effort to remain effective for many Soldiers."

While overall motorcycle fatalities are on a downward trend, enlisted leaders at the rank of sergeant and above still account for a disproportionate share of deaths, according to USACRC Command Sgt. Maj. Leeford Cain.

"This is a years-long trend, and it's disturbing to me these accidents are still happening," Cain said. "Recognizing indiscipline within our leaders and within ourselves is key. The Army gives us the training to ride right, now we have to be the kind of riders our Soldiers can look up to and emulate."

In addition to its enduring theme of "Share the Road," which encourages motorists to take extra caution around motorcycles, NHTSA is highlighting the dangers of drinking and riding with their "Ride Sober or Get Pulled Over" initiative. Alcohol is one of the leading indiscipline factors in Army motorcycle accidents, Cain said.

“It’s good to see national attention focused on this problem,” he said. “Riders put themselves and others at just as great a risk when they ride drunk as drunk drivers. While we don’t see it as often as speeding or lack of protective gear, it’s still a very valid concern for the Army.”

In honor of the national observance, the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center will launch a media campaign May 1 highlighting motorcycle safety. Feature articles, posters and public service announcement videos will be released throughout the month as part of the campaign, as well as links to news stories recognizing the motorcycle safety efforts of formations across the Army. The initial launch will be available at <https://safety.army.mil>, and new materials will be added to the site each week.

The NHTSA campaign can be found online at <http://www.nhtsa.gov/Safety/Motorcycles>.