

Senior Leaders,

As many of you know, our Army has made steady and sustained progress in the fight against preventable accidents. Between fiscal 2005 and fiscal 2009, accidental Soldier deaths fell 42 percent and have remained relatively stable since, offering proof that our Leaders, Soldiers, Family members and Civilians are working together to keep one another safe. This dedication to safety and to the mission forms the bedrock of our Army Safety Program, and I am convinced it remains strong as ever in this new fiscal year.

Fiscal 2012 has already offered its challenges, however. Fatal accidents were up about six percent from the previous year as we closed out the holiday season Jan. 1; sadly, privately owned vehicle losses comprised the largest share of the increase. Historically, accidental fatalities are at their lowest during the first and second quarters, so our first quarter closeout should give us pause as a worrying indicator of things to come later this year. Our junior Leaders are our first and best line of defense against preventable accidents, and with Senior Leader's help and encouragement, they should redouble their efforts at engaging with their Soldiers through this critical period and the remainder of 2012.

#### OFF DUTY

Overall, POV fatalities were up 19 percent from the previous year's first quarter, with a staggering 72-percent rise in losses in sedans and other POVs (primarily trucks, SUVs and vans) leading the increase. However, the first quarter's 50-percent decline in motorcycle fatalities represented a positive shift from 2011, when losses climbed steadily each quarter through the end of the year. Indiscipline issues remain the top concern in POV safety, especially regarding speed and nonuse of seat belts — the primary culprits in the overwhelming majority of fatal POV accidents.

One thing nearly all our Soldiers have in common is a POV. While the make and model of vehicles varies widely, their owners have all passed fairly uniform licensing exams and drive on highways with federally imposed speed limits. Even when laws vary by state, most Soldiers grew up with some type of seat belt law and, in the case of our youngest generations, never left the safety of infant or booster seats until an appropriate age. Yet there are always a few Soldiers who willfully disregard the standard; some get lucky, while others meet tragic ends. We all have the mission of finding the source of this disconnect and doing everything in our power to steer our at-risk Soldiers back to a safe path.

Engagement is the first step because it allows junior Leaders to identify at-risk Soldiers. But as senior Leaders, we have the power to make a real difference by mandating remedial driver training at our installations and within our formations. With the 4 October 2011 rapid action revision to Army Regulation 385-10, the American Institute for Public Safety's "Roadrageous" driver training course was added as a formal component to the Army Traffic Safety Training Program. The course focuses on driver behavior and attitudes, and is designed to change the way people think and behave when driving or riding. On-post magistrates may direct the training for Soldiers charged with moving violations, but more importantly, commanders can now send Soldiers identified as "at risk" behind the wheel or on the bike to the training program.

Undoubtedly, Leaders play an important role in Soldier safety, but it's ultimately up to the individual to make smart decisions on their own. We can do many things to empower our Soldiers to take responsibility for their personal safety, starting with making them aware of potential hazards. To answer this need, the USACR/Safety Center recently updated our very

successful series of Individual and Battle Buddy Risk Assessment cards, available for download and printing at <https://safety.army.mil>. The cards contain questions specifically formulated to highlight risky behaviors and provide guidance on risk mitigation measures, as well as a list of resources for Soldiers who may need further assistance. We must drive home the point that inaction is never the answer when someone is at risk, and these assessments are a great way for Leaders at all levels to engage with their Soldiers on the subject.

## ON DUTY GROUND

On-duty ground fatalities were up slightly from the previous year, with five Soldiers killed during the first quarter in unrelated accidents: One in a fratricide incident in Afghanistan, one in a HMMWV rollover during a training exercise, one in a Stryker rollover during rotational training, one from heat injury during physical training and the final in an on-post motorcycle accident during duty hours. Fortunately, on-duty Soldier deaths have fallen to a point where no specific trends are evident at any given time, but that doesn't mean we can rest easy. Soldiers looking out for one another is making a tremendous difference, but all Leaders must stay engaged to mitigate the effects of our Army's inherently risky business. Every job our Soldiers perform has innate hazards, and we must continually train and stay engaged to keep our Soldiers safe and mission ready. We've been particularly focused on MRAP driver and crew training during the past couple of years, and that attention has paid dividends for Soldiers working with these massive machines. But we can't lose sight of the dangers of the other vehicles in our fleets, especially as we reset from operations in Iraq and draw down our presence in Afghanistan. Preparing for the next fight will mean training with every tool in our arsenal, and we must ensure all our vehicle crews are trained to and follow the standard on each and every mission.

## ON DUTY AIR

Aviation fatalities were up 25 percent from 2011 at the close of the first quarter, with four Soldiers killed on a stateside training mission and a fifth who died after walking into the rotor system of an operating aircraft. Investigations into both accidents are ongoing, but preliminary findings suggest our aviation Leaders should renew their focus on two critical training areas: situational awareness and crew coordination. There is no margin for error in aviation operations at any time, and just as on the ground, evolving mission requirements mean we must get back to the basics of training. Leaders must emphasize the importance crew coordination and situational awareness throughout every flight profile, no matter the mission or environment.

## CONCLUSION

I firmly believe our Leaders and Soldiers "get it" — we've seen this in spades during the past few years as on-duty losses have dropped steadily to historic lows. I ask for your continued assistance in getting our young Leaders and Soldiers to apply that same "engaged" on-duty approach to all their off-duty activities, especially regarding POVs. Getting the message across will require all our efforts, and I encourage you to use every resource at your disposal. There are many new and proven safety tools available on our website, <https://safety.army.mil>, and I encourage you to fully leverage the expertise of the safety professionals across your commands. These dedicated Department of the Army Civilians are an incredible asset to your command and your Soldiers, but only if you use them.

As always, thank you for what you do every day to keep your Soldiers safe, and please know my team is here to assist in any way possible. Best wishes for a happy, healthy and safe New Year!