



Third Quarter, Fiscal 2013

Senior Leaders,

We're steadily marching toward the end of the fiscal year, and by all indications, we're doing it safer than ever before. This third quarter was one of the safest on record, a fact that speaks to the power of a proactive safety culture and Soldiers looking out for themselves and one another. In all, 2013 is looking like a record-breaking year for Army safety — but we must remember that success can be short-lived, especially if Soldiers become over eager to enjoy the fleeting days of summer.

Here's where we are, according to the numbers: Overall accidental fatalities are down 20 percent from this time last year. Every on-duty accident category is in the negative as compared to 2012, even aviation, which saw a worrying increase during the first two quarters this year. Army combat vehicle and Army motor vehicle losses are down significantly, by 75 percent and 17 percent respectively. That's pretty impressive, given our ongoing transition back to training and readiness posture and the corresponding number of Army vehicles traveling on posts these days.

The same can be said off duty. More Soldiers are at home now than in the previous decade, yet off-duty accidental fatalities have dropped 20 percent from 2012. We've seen a welcome decrease in private motor vehicle deaths this year, with sedan and motorcycle fatalities down a combined 25 percent. Enhanced training, engaged leadership and a renewed emphasis on discipline and standards have led Soldiers to own safety like never before, and it's showing on our nation's roadways.

Yet, it's dangerous to claim victory. We'll never be "there" regarding safety; we're always one bad accident away from erasing any gains made throughout the year. We ask so much of our Soldiers and it's sometimes easy to forget they're human, prone to the same mistakes and failures as the civilian population. The fact is, people slip up — even Soldiers — and we need to start recognizing the differences between indiscipline and true accidents. Even the best and brightest in your ranks can make a bad decision that leads to tragedy, and it's not any less a case of indiscipline than the Soldier who has an established pattern of standards violations. A recent accident demonstrates this point.

An Army Special Operations Soldier was killed toward the end of the third quarter in an all terrain vehicle accident while TDY to Kenya. By all accounts, he was a stand-up Soldier, one of the best of the best among our elite operators. But, he wasn't immune to the poor decisions that ultimately resulted in his death. The ATV was leased for official purposes, but the Soldier opted to ride it off duty. He didn't wear a helmet as required by Army Regulation 385-10, so his head was completely unprotected as the ATV flipped during his ride. These two factors alone beg the question, was it an accident, or was it indiscipline?

We're doing a good job, but we can always do better. This wasn't the only Soldier to die in an ATV mishap this year; in fact, fiscal 2013 is one of the worst years for ATV fatalities in recent memory. We can prevent these tragedies by going after them just as hard as we've pursued indiscipline on motorcycles. The Progressive Motorcycle Program and Motorcycle Mentorship Program provide a perfect template for commanders to use in setting up local ATV safety programs. Many of the risks are the same, and ATV training courses are available through the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, the certifying authority for the Army's motorcycle training program. I encourage you to think about how you can help your Soldiers avoid accidents like these and take action to correct training deficiencies, whether through SOP or other commander's policy alternatives.

It's never fun to talk about a Soldier we've lost, but it's nice to follow these difficult conversations with positive news from the field. Quite simply, I'm continually amazed at the creativity and enthusiasm Soldiers and Army civilians put into safety every day. Two shining examples came to my attention this quarter, and I'll share their stories with you now.

First, Joe Michalkiewicz, safety manager with 5th Signal Command, Wiesbaden, Germany, knows how to get Soldiers involved in safety. I had the pleasure of watching video of one of their recent safety events, where teams from commands throughout Wiesbaden compete in a "safety showdown" similar to the ever-popular game show Jeopardy. Each team had its own cheering section, and judging from their smiles, Soldiers on the hot seat had a great time answering their safety trivia questions. By appealing to their competitive side and making the game fun, Michalkiewicz effectively engaged Wiesbaden's Soldiers on safety. For a DVD copy or more information, contact Joe directly through AKO.

Here at Fort Rucker, Staff Sgt. Shane Cook wants his Soldiers to enjoy safety too. Cook, the aviation safety NCO and lead motorcycle mentor for 1st Battalion, 223rd Aviation Regiment, has built a robust MMP and organizes quarterly rides for the battalion's motorcycle riders. The latest ride, held just before the Independence Day holiday, began on post and wound through many of the long, secluded highways in the local area. But before anyone began, Cook himself performed a thorough inspection of each bike, and all riders completed a quick refresher course on accident avoidance basics conducted by Rucker's MSF trainers. Having been seriously injured in a motorcycle-deer collision several years ago, Cook's goal is to keep his Soldiers' skills fresh before they need them on the road. His program shows what's possible by pooling local resources with the wisdom and experience of veteran riders.

These are just two members of the Army team doing great things for safety every day. It can't be said enough — we wouldn't be where we are without everyone working together and strong leaders to guide them. Please recognize those doing good in your formations and urge them to keep the momentum going. We all benefit in the end with a strong, safe and healthy force.

Here are some final takeaways to share with your Soldiers:

- Across the Army, accidental fatalities are down 20 percent from this time last year. We're doing a great job, and that's because of everyone doing their part to stay safe.
- Just like physical fitness, maintaining safety is a constant effort. By continuing to do what we know works, we'll all be safer in the end. Leader engagement is the key to keeping safety in your Soldiers' dialogue.
- The most dangerous time of year for accidents and injuries is May through September. We'll soon be nearing the end of summer, but warm weather will linger for our southern installations. This means a longer riding season for motorcyclists and more opportunities for water activities; accidents involving both tend to spike during the fourth quarter. Safety is an urgent issue these next few months!
- Currently, the majority of fatalities in PMV-4 accidents include Soldiers 22-25 years old and at the rank of specialist/corporal. PMV-2 fatalities are mostly comprised of Soldiers 29-38 years old and at the rank of sergeant and above. Where do you fall, where do your Soldiers fall, and what can you do to prevent them, or you, from becoming a statistic?
- "Across every Army unit and every installation, safety is everyone's responsibility. ... It is imperative that leaders continue to make safety a priority, and that soldiers take seriously, actions that put themselves and others at risk." ~ Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, Army Chief of Staff

Thank you again for all you do for our Soldiers and our Army. Remember that with the fourth quarter ahead, we can't afford complacency. Your Soldiers will want to enjoy as much fun as possible before summer's end, and we need to make sure they do it the right way. Check out all the seasonal tools at <https://safety.army.mil> and let me know how I can help; we're here to serve you. Enjoy the rest of your summer, but always play it safe!

Army Safe is Army Strong!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy J. Edens". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "E".

TIMOTHY J. EDENS
Brigadier General, USA
Commanding