



## Safety Sends

### Second Quarter, Fiscal 2012

Senior Leaders,

Halfway through fiscal 2012, I'm pleased to report our Army is on good footing at this point in the fiscal year regarding safety. Total fatality numbers remain on par with the midway point in fiscal 2011 and, from a historical perspective, are the third lowest on record, falling just above the all-time low achieved during 1997. Most surprisingly, off-duty fatalities are down by double digits, a great news story for all our Leaders, Soldiers, Family members and Civilians working hard for safety every day. Sustaining this downward trend and maintaining last year's phenomenal on-duty safety success won't be easy, however, especially as we enter the traditional high season for accidental fatalities.

#### OFF DUTY

The biggest surprise of the second quarter was a 14 percent reduction in off-duty fatalities as compared to the first six months of fiscal 2011. This drop was achieved in spite of a nearly 20 percent increase in off-duty deaths during the first quarter, led by a staggering rise in losses in sedans and other POVs. Fortunately, those numbers have now stabilized and are equal to or less than last year's figures. Even motorcycle fatalities remain below the 2011 benchmark, which is especially remarkable considering a mild winter that extended the riding season for many Soldiers in the United States.

This welcome respite doesn't mean we can drop our guard, however. I firmly believe our Leaders and Soldiers took notice of the problems we experienced during the first quarter and renewed their commitment to engagement to save lives, thereby driving our numbers down. We must redouble those efforts now that we're well into spring and rapidly counting the days to summer, the two seasons that predictably are deadliest for our Soldiers off duty.

Engagement obviously works, so I ask that you encourage each of your Leaders to place intense focus on curbing indiscipline and identifying the high-risk Soldiers within their formations. Even those Soldiers who do everything right on duty might be behaving recklessly away from work, but our first-line Leaders will never know if they don't talk to their subordinates. A great set of tools to help young Leaders have a discussion about risk is our soon-to-be-launched Off Duty Safety Awareness Package and our Preliminary Loss Report database, both available at <https://safety.army.mil>. The Safety Awareness Package and the PLRs provide great conversation starters for young Leaders by sharing real-world stories that Soldiers can relate to and talk about with their first-line leadership and with their friends. Both tools allow our young troops to see the real-world consequences of risky behavior by Soldiers just like them, and they're a great tool for Leaders to begin the engagement process.

While much of our focus should be on POV and POM accident prevention, we can't forget the other hazards that come with spring and summer. We've already lost two Soldiers to drowning this fiscal year, and that number is sure to go up as the weather warms and conditions become more favorable for water-related activities. Additionally, two Soldiers died in pedestrian accidents within less than a week during

early March, one while crossing a highway and the other while assisting another Soldier involved in a minor accident. Our annual Army Spring/Summer campaign is currently underway and contains valuable media tools on both these topics and many other seasonal issues, so please check out our website and share this great information with your Leaders and safety professionals.

## ON DUTY GROUND

Four Soldiers died in on-duty ground accidents during the second quarter, a 33 percent decrease from the first quarter of fiscal 2012. One Soldier was killed when he attempted to pull a child from the path of the MRAP he was ground guiding, and another Soldier died when the pickup truck he was riding in rolled over after the driver swerved to avoid a local national's vehicle. The two remaining fatalities were especially disturbing, however, and both involved high-powered weapons systems.

During the first incident, a Soldier was fatally shot through the abdomen by the warhead from an M72 light anti-tank weapon. The Soldier was reportedly receiving an unauthorized demonstration from another Soldier when the weapon fired. The investigation into the second accident is ongoing, but preliminary reports show a Soldier suffered fatal blast injuries when an AT-4 system detonated during training.

Incidents like these are thankfully rare, but two occurring so closely together is a reminder we should re-engage with our Soldiers on the very real risks of our Army's most powerful weapons. Even Soldiers proficient with a given system are not immune to accidents, and standards should be rigorously enforced to ensure all weapons are handled and trained in the safest manner possible. Informal demonstrations should never be tolerated by Soldiers at any level — safe handling and storage procedures are necessary because there is no margin for error should something go wrong, and the consequences are too often tragic.

## ON DUTY AIR

While no aviation fatalities were recorded during the second quarter, Class A damage accidents were up 67 percent from the first quarter. Combined with a total 25 percent increase in aviation fatalities from the midway point in fiscal 2011 and the fact that aviation OPTEMPO has remained steady with previous years, I am concerned we could be headed for a difficult glideslope.

Our most pressing issue continues to be human error, of which there are many causes. Current data suggest indiscipline and poor-quality mission briefings are primarily to blame for the human error accidents reported thus far in fiscal 2012. I am confident these trends are reversible, but turning the arrow down will require Aviation commanders, Leaders and trainers to place special emphasis on the following three critical issues.

First, Aviation Leaders must reinforce a command climate of accountability. Violations of regulations and procedures must never be tolerated, no matter how well liked an aviator may be within the unit or chain of command. Second, all Leaders should review their unit's three-step mission approval process. Recent investigations show a breakdown in step two, specifically regarding mission planning and briefing, which requires personal communication and interaction to ensure understanding of all elements involved in the flight. Lastly, Leaders should review how they conduct mission briefing officer and final mission approval authority training. Mission briefing officers are the eyes and ears who ensure the commander's risk management program is followed to the letter, so Leaders must take the time for periodic over-the-shoulder reviews to ensure they are adequately meeting their responsibilities.

## CONCLUSION

Our second quarter numbers show we're on the right track for safety, both on and off duty. The decline in POV and POM accidents is especially promising, but it will take all our efforts to ensure this downward trend continues through the spring and summer — historically, this is the toughest time of the year, so stay vigilant. As always, thank you for what you do every day to keep our Soldiers safe, and please don't hesitate to let me know if there is anything the USACR/Safety Center can do to help. Enjoy this beautiful time of year, but remember to always play it safe!

Army Safe is Army Strong!

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

WILLIAM T. WOLF  
Brigadier General, USA  
Commanding