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## Firearms and alcohol: a deadly mix

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One Soldier dead from an unintended discharge is one too many, yet four were killed in weapons accidents during fiscal 2015.

While not all deaths from unintended discharges involve alcohol, it's important to remember that, just like driving drunk, handling weapons while under the influence can be deadly.

"Many of the privately owned weapons accidents we see involve alcohol," said Tracey Russell, Ground Directorate, U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center. "The bottom line is alcohol and weapons should never mix."

The typical accident scene from an unintended discharge follows a familiar pattern.

"What we see most are multiple Soldiers and Family members in a social setting and someone says, 'Hey, want to see my new gun?'" Russell said. "Everybody's had a few drinks, they assume the weapon isn't loaded and someone ends up dead."

Preventing the chain of events that lead to such tragedy include Soldiers taking responsibility for their personal behavior and stepping in to stop others handling a weapon inappropriately.

"You need to intervene and stop someone from doing something stupid," Russell said, explaining that several Soldiers have died after they or someone else inadvertently discharged a weapon while "playing a joke."

Soldiers receive weapons training from the time they enter the Army and are therefore familiar with safe weapons handling. However, Russell said complacency is often an issue with privately owned weapons.

"Make sure you know how to properly operate the weapon, read the owner's manual and take a class if necessary," she said. "Not every gun is the same, and being qualified on the range doesn't mean you're qualified to safely handle every firearm available."

Common sense has a vote: If you're going to handle a weapon, don't drink; if you're going to drink, don't handle a weapon.

For more information on safe weapons handling, visit <https://safety.army.mil>.