



U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

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Celebrate sensibly, not senselessly

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Typically, the holiday season is synonymous with celebration, but Army leaders want Soldiers, Civilians and Family members to make safety part of their plans.

Whether you travel home during the exodus to spend time with loved ones or stay on post for a holiday feast, Command Sgt. Maj. Richard D. Stidley, U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center, has a message for you.

“Most holiday tragedies are preventable, and you need to take care of yourself and your battle buddies,” he said. “Before heading out for a party or night on the town, agree to a plan, stick to it and make good decisions.”

Alcohol is a staple of many holiday gatherings, but it’s also a contributing factor in a number of Army accidents.

In November 2011, a Soldier was killed in a privately owned vehicle accident after driving the wrong way on an interstate and colliding head on with another vehicle. Two occupants in the second vehicle also died. The Soldier was suspected of drinking prior to the accident.

Another Soldier was killed in January 2012 when he lost control of his motorcycle, struck a fence and was thrown from his bike. He was an experienced rider, properly licensed and wearing personal protective equipment. Alcohol was confirmed as a contributing factor.

During 2010, more than 10,000 people died in alcohol-impaired driving crashes — one every 51 minutes, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. On average, 25 people were killed in alcohol-related accidents every day during December that year.

“The risks involved with drinking and driving aren’t worth it,” Stidley said. “Here’s a simple concept I want everyone to consider: If you choose to drink, do not drive.”

In addition to the human cost, a driving under the influence conviction can ruin a Soldier’s career.

“Soldiers found guilty of DUI can face a civilian criminal conviction, punishment under the Uniform Code of Military Justice resulting in reduction in rank, bar from re-enlistment, dishonorable discharge or, even worse, suffer loss of life if they decide to drive while impaired,” said Maj. Jennifer Farmer, command judge advocate, USACR/Safety Center.

She explained that active-duty Soldiers who refuse to take or complete a lawfully requested blood, breath or urine test to measure alcohol or drug content, either on or off post, or those stopped on post with a blood alcohol content of .08 or higher will be issued a General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand by the installation

commander. The same criteria apply off post when BAC is found to be in violation of state law. Further, the GOMOR may remain a permanent part of the Soldier's personnel file.

"A GOMOR is not automatically withdrawn because a Soldier is acquitted at a criminal trial or if the DUI is reduced to a lesser charge," Farmer said.

The solution to the problem, according to Stidley, is Soldiers upholding the standard, even off duty.

"Soldiers shouldn't let indiscipline override their decisions," he said. "They need to dig deep and have the moral courage to do what's right."

More information on holiday safety is available at <https://safety.army.mil>.