

Chief of Staff of the Army safety message

Gen. George W. Casey, Chief of Staff of the Army

Chief of Staff of the Army safety message

Nov. 24, 2008 -- Through a renewed emphasis on safety by our leaders and Soldiers, and the implementation of safety program improvements and initiatives targeted at leading accident causal factors, Army achieved significant accident reductions in FY08. Overall, accident fatalities were down 16%. Our Army experienced a significant reduction in on-duty mishaps and our serious aviation flight accident rate decreased by 52%. We all appreciate that one accident is one too many, and we have a long way to go in reducing accidents, but we need to stop and recognize the tremendous efforts being made across the Army, and that these efforts are saving lives and reducing pain and suffering.

However, driving fatalities - again the leading cause of accidental deaths, accounting for 62% of accident-related fatalities - increased 17% from FY07. The lives of 126 Soldiers were lost to privately-owned vehicle accidents in FY08. Motorcycle accidents contributed to over 40% of that number. The major causes of motorcycle accidents are excessive speed and failure to follow published procedures or violation of established standards. We have got to find a way to get through to our Soldiers - particularly those in the 32 and under age bracket - to stop the indiscipline and high risk behavior behind many of these fatalities.

As we begin FY09, I ask that you take another look at the Army's safety objectives.

- Approximately 75% of our FY08 accidental fatalities occurred off-duty. While sustaining our on-duty accident prevention efforts, we need to target our loss prevention programs on off-duty accidents, primarily towards motor vehicle accidents.
- We must improve the Army's safety climate and culture. The US Army Combat Readiness / Safety Center has developed some great tools - including the Army Readiness Assessment Program as well as Individual and Leader Accident Risk Assessments - to assess climate and culture. Use your command safety professionals and the Combat Readiness / Safety Center and develop plans to fill any gaps in your command's safety climate and culture.
- Every leader must take a holistic look at his or her command environment and find ways to influence our Soldiers, their Family members, Civilian and contractor employees to use risk management - on, and especially off-duty. Get creative. Look to Families and the community to help us save lives.

Our Soldiers are our most valued assets and preventable losses impact our formations every day. While Soldiers have clearly taken greater responsibility for their personal safety, as well as the safety of their fellow Brothers in Arms, leaders must continue to stay engaged in their Soldiers' lives to affect smart decision-making.

U.S. Army War College Archives - News Article - 01 December 2008