



# New Army Safety Regulations Focus on Motorcycle, Water Safety

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**R**ecent revisions to Army safety regulations include updates to motorcycle safety policies, as well as new guidance on how leaders should handle Soldiers with limited swimming ability.

Major revisions to AR 385-10, The Army Safety Program, were released Nov. 27. They were the first revisions to the regulations since 2007, said Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Stidley, command sergeant major of the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center at Fort Rucker, Ala.

“A lot of times when we do revisions in the Army, it’s just cosmetic stuff,” Stidley said. “But for us, safety

has really evolved over the past four or five years, especially in things that relate directly to the Soldiers, like motorcycle safety.”

Changes to the motorcycle safety regulations include updates to the Progressive Motorcycle Program, plus making it clear that personal protective equipment, or PPE, must be worn both on- and off-post, and both on- and off-road.

“Last year we lost fewer than 100 Soldiers to combat operations, and we lost 50 to motorcycle accidents,” Stidley said. “That’s crazy. Most of those motorcycle fatalities involved some sort of indiscipline

or poor decision-making. We have very few fatalities where a guy is just riding along, doing the right thing. Most of ours involve a failure to follow instructions, failure to wear PPE, exceeding the speed limit by a lot or not taking the motorcycle training on a big bike you just bought.

“The problem I have personally with motorcycle fatalities is, last year, about 56 percent of our fatalities were leaders, and of those leaders, almost all were non-commissioned officers,” Stidley said.

Preventing motorcycle fatalities starts with a unit’s NCOs, Stidley said.

“The first thing NCOs need to know is who their riders are,” Stidley said. “The second thing they need to do is go to our website and pull down the products to make themselves smart. A lot of leaders aren’t riders. If they are going out to inspect a motorcycle, they don’t know what to look for. But we’ve provided all of that. We’ve made a ‘Basics for Non-Riding Leaders’ handbook, and things like that. They need to know who’s been trained and who hasn’t been trained.”

Under previous guidance, commanders were allowed to put Soldiers in remedial driver’s training only if they committed an offense in a government vehicle. The revision to AR 385-10 gives a commander much more flexibility, Stidley said.

“Now it’s cleaned up to say that commanders have the authority to refer high-risk Soldiers to remedial driver’s training based on their risky driving behaviors or an accumulation of traffic points, which really helps the commander have another tool to try to retrain and work on some of the cultural problems we have with Soldiers today,” Stidley said.

## Water safety

Concerns about water-related fatalities led to new regulations that require commanders to identify weak and nonswimmers and make sure they are getting the proper survival training.

“Depending on your installation, some don’t think the whole water safety thing is that big of a deal,” Stidley said. “It all goes back to helping young leaders — I’m talking about young sergeants — identify risk. If you know a kid is a nonswimmer or a weak swimmer, and if he tells you he’s going fishing that weekend, it helps you identify the risk before it becomes another fatality.”

Previous to these revisions, the Army Readiness Assessment Program was highly encouraged. The survey is now a requirement within 90 days of a battalion commander assuming his position. It is an anonymous survey that can tell a commander a lot about his unit, Stidley said.

“It’s very culture-based, like, ‘In your unit, is the safety NCO position viewed as a useful position?’” Stidley said. “It’s not so much about the person, but about

the culture in the unit. It leads to direct feedback to the battalion commander. We have a series of questions so we can compare like units, and that gives commanders an idea of where they stand amid other like units. It also allows them to add some questions if they think they have a problem in a certain area. Commanders learn a lot about their units when a Soldier knows that his survey is anonymous.”

Stidley said all the safety regulations in the world won’t help unless NCOs and other leaders are paying attention to Soldiers and making sure they behave safely, on- and off-duty.

“There are basically two options here,” Stidley said. “You can either enforce the standard and apply disciplinary actions if need be, or you can have a memorial service. No one wants to have a memorial service.”

## Off-duty hours

Thanks to the efforts of dedicated NCOs and other leaders in the Army, vast safety improvements have been made in the past 40 years. The statistics have shown steady improvements, Stidley said.

“Back in the early days, we were having fatalities in the number of 500 and 600 a year,” he said. “In 2005, we had 300. Last year, we drove that down to 135.”

Further improvement can only come from a continued focus from NCOs, Stidley said.

“We believe that we have about reached the end of material fixes for things,” Stidley said. “Our helicopters are as good as they are going to get. Our tanks are about as good as they’re going to get. Our Bradleys — most of our stuff is as good as it’s going to get, material-wise. So now, it’s all about culture. It’s about decision-making.

“Our accidents, our fatalities, occur about 5-to-1 off-duty versus on-duty. So it’s not during the duty day. Human error accounts for 80 percent to 90 percent of our fatalities. It’s the Soldiers after 1700. When I say Soldier, I’m talking about all ranks making good decisions at 1 or 2 o’clock in the morning.

“The problem we face is Soldiers believe once they take the uniform off and go home that all the risk-mitigation and risk-management principles they apply during the day don’t apply to them off-duty. That’s a cultural problem, and that’s what’s getting them killed.

“Here’s an example that I use,” Stidley said. “If a unit has a young man out there cutting grass during the duty day, the kid has on every piece of PPE that the Army could create. But when the young man goes home and mows his own yard on Saturday, does he have on shorts and flip-flops and is drinking a beer? Or does he realize that the same rock that could have popped up and poked him in the eye during the duty day could just as easily pop up and poke him in the eye at his house?”

“Privately owned vehicles — car, van, truck, SUV, motorcycle — cause 70 percent of our fatalities on the average year,” Stidley said. “So the most dangerous thing that you or I do every day is get behind the wheel of our car to drive to work. But does the Soldier understand that? Does he put on his seat belt at home? Because you know he puts on his seat belt at work. That’s our challenge.” ■

### More information

U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center home page: [safety.army.mil/Default.aspx](http://safety.army.mil/Default.aspx)

Center’s motorcycle safety page: [safety.army.mil/povmotorcyclesafety/](http://safety.army.mil/povmotorcyclesafety/)

AR 385-10, The Army Safety Program: [armypubs.army.mil/epubs/pdf/r385\\_10.pdf](http://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/pdf/r385_10.pdf)



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