

# NATIONAL SAFETY MONTH



## It's summer: Time For NCOs to Remind Soldiers about Safety

By Lisa Ferdinando:

Army News Service

**W**ASHINGTON — The dog days of summer are almost upon us — the lazy days that bring opportunities for Soldiers to dust off the motorcycle, take the truck out for a spin, or enjoy a cookout with buddies.

As Soldiers head outdoors for summertime activities, they must always be vigilant about safety, said Brig. Gen. Timothy J. Edens, the director of Army Safety and commanding general of the Army Combat Readiness and Safety Center.

June, which is National Safety Month, is a critical time to remind Soldiers, civilians and families about the important steps they need to take to help keep themselves and others safe, he said.

The safety reminder is for a good reason, he said, as people tend to let their guard down and take more risks in the summer. From never driving under the influence to always wearing a seatbelt, there are simple steps Soldiers can take to protect themselves.

Edens said summer is historically the deadliest time of year for off-duty accidents in the Army. From a statistical standpoint, that is most likely due to the number of Soldiers outdoors doing activities with friends and

family. The more exposure on the road or on the water leads to greater risk for accidents.

Human error plays a big role as well, said Edens.

“Soldiers may be more impatient to start vacation or simply want to ‘live it up’ before they go back to work,” said Edens. “Anecdotally, summer seems to bring those impulses out in people more than any other season and cause some to take more risks than they usually would.”

As Soldiers operate their motorcycles, cars and trucks, do extreme sports, bike and swim, the Army wants to make sure all members stay safe.

From fiscal year 2008 to fiscal year 2012, the Army lost an average of 133 Soldiers each year in off-duty accidents, Edens said.

Accidents in private motor vehicles — primarily sedans, trucks and motorcycles — remain the No. 1 accidental killer of Soldiers.

“More often than not, the accidents we suffer as an Army are entirely preventable,” said Edens. “A Soldier who drives his or her personal vehicle well above the speed limit and/or doesn’t wear a seat belt is going to be in trouble in a crash. Fate has no part in that — it is self-imposed risk.”

## Protect yourself

The Army is highlighting important safety steps for everyone to take, including:

- Always wear a seat belt when riding in a vehicle.
- Never operate a vehicle distracted or under the influence.
- Always wear a helmet when riding a bicycle.
- Always wear protective gear, including a helmet, when riding on a motorcycle.
- Obey the speed limit.
- Always follow all safety precautions for handling and storing privately owned weapons.
- Follow safety precautions when in the water and when doing extreme sports, never dive into an unfamiliar body of water, and always wear a life vest when boating.
- Exercise caution when walking on roadways, especially at night; always cross at a crosswalk, never walk on railroad tracks.

While the weather is warm, Soldiers and civilians are anxious to get home and get outdoors. But the Army also stresses that Soldiers and civilians must remain vigilant

at the workplace as well, in order to keep everyone safe.

“It’s really all about acting responsibly both on and off duty,” said Edens.

The Army has made a tremendous investment in training Soldiers both on and off duty, he said, especially with regard to vehicle operation.

Soldiers who ride motorcycles are required to take a motorcycle safety course and must wear protective gear, including a helmet, and a long-sleeved shirt or jacket, when riding on or off base. Accidents on motorcycles remain a leading cause of fatalities and serious injuries for Soldiers.

“What keeps Soldiers safe at work also keeps them safe off duty: training, discipline and standards,” said Edens. “It only takes one short trip without a seat belt, a ride without a helmet or a shortcut on the range to end in tragedy.”

Always keep safety at the forefront, not just in the summer, but throughout the entire year, he said.

“It’s true you only live once, but it can be a short ride if you take unnecessary risks,” said Edens. ■



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