



Preserving and protecting our Army's combat resources
U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Michael Negard
Telephone: (334) 255-3770
michael.j.negard.civ@mail.mil
<https://safety.army.mil/>

Safety a focus of holiday exodus

JULIE SHELLEY

**Communication and Public Affairs
U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center**

Senior Army leaders are making safety a priority during the upcoming holiday block leave period, with first-line supervisors the primary target of a communications campaign designed to engage junior Soldiers on the hazards of the season.

According to data from the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center, the weeks between Thanksgiving and just after New Year's Day are the second-deadliest time of year for off-duty mishaps, trailing only the summer months in total fatalities. The Army loses approximately 11 Soldiers annually during the holiday exodus, with most at the rank of E3 or E4.

"We know better and can do better than this," said USACRC Command Sgt. Maj. William L. Gardner. "Safety is the most precious gift we can give this holiday season."

The campaign will focus primarily on private motor vehicles, the single-largest fatal mishap type not just during the holidays, but year-round, and alcohol, the leading causal factor in block leave fatalities.

"We've deliberately chosen these two topics based on what our data tells us," said Brig. Gen. Andrew C. Hilmes, USACRC commanding general and director of Army Safety. "There will be no bigger threat to our Soldiers this exodus than driving to, from, or in and around their leave destinations."

The USACRC developed the campaign, including feature articles, posters, public service announcements and direct links to risk mitigation tools such as the Travel Risk Planning System and Off-Duty Safety Awareness Presentation, to make first-line supervisors aware of the issues and provide them a platform for dialogue.

"While TRiPS is no longer an Army requirement for leave or pass, it's still a great tool for engaging Soldiers in conversation about PMV hazards," Hilmes said. "It will be especially helpful for leaders of younger Soldiers who haven't driven long distances back home before or thought past the desire of getting there. There's really no better tool for raising awareness of hazards on the road."

Likewise, ODSAP, released annually prior to summer, has proven effective for leaders looking to talk to their Soldiers beyond the standard safety brief. Covering a range of off-duty topics and designed for use at the small unit level, each stand-alone segment may be briefed individually or as a whole to accommodate training schedules.

“In effect, the holidays are a microcosm of summer regarding mishaps,” Hilmes said. “We tend to see the same types of fatalities, sometimes even outdoors. The goodness of ODSAP is that it touches on all these subjects and gives Soldiers a well-rounded, holistic view of off-duty risk management.”

Hilmes also urged leaders to counsel their Soldiers on similarities of the risk management process both on and off duty.

“Dynamic risk management is the standard for every mission, meaning we adjust our plans as conditions change,” he explained. “Off duty, that can look like pulling over for bad weather, recognizing you’re too tired to drive and stopping for the night, or calling a cab if you’ve been drinking. Things happen, but that doesn’t mean you have to take unnecessary risk — there’s always an alternative.”

The complete campaign is available on the USACRC website, <https://safety.army.mil/MEDIA/Seasonal-Safety-Campaigns/Fall-Winter-Safety-2020>.