



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

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Army releases annual safety assessment

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The U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center has released its assessment of the Army Safety Program for fiscal 2021, highlighting the successes and challenges of operations in the ongoing COVID-19 environment.

In fiscal 2021, there were 109 Soldier and Department of the Army Civilian mishap fatalities reported between Oct. 1, 2020, and Sept. 30, 2021. This is an increase from the 96 lost in FY20, but according to subject matter experts, the increase was attributed to off-duty mishaps in the environment of reduced pandemic restrictions.

“Although we recorded the lowest number of on-duty mishap fatalities (18) in its history, we know these fatalities were mostly preventable,” said Brig. Gen. Andrew C. Hilmes, USACRC commanding general and director of Army Safety. “However, we can never rest – we can never settle.”

FY21 was a record-breaking low year for on-duty Class A ground mishaps. The 18 reported mishaps were down 25% from the previous historic lows experienced in FY16 and FY20 (24). On-duty ground Soldier fatalities, also a new record low, fell 47% from FY20 (9 in FY21 versus 17 in FY20). Those FY20 lows were thought to have been heavily influenced by COVID-19 and analysts feared a return to higher losses in FY21. Fortunately, it seems that we are just doing better in our training and risk management practices than at any time in history. This is especially true in motor vehicle operations.

The Army attributed the reduction in fatal on-duty mishaps to two quarters — 3rd-Quarter Tactical Vehicle Spike and 4th-Quarter Aviation Spike campaigns.

During FY15-19, the Army experienced a sharp increase in tactical vehicle mishaps, specifically during May and June, with nearly one-third occurring over just 16% of the fiscal calendar. In FY21, there was just one Class A ground tactical vehicle mishap in the third quarter. The previous five years averaged almost six Class A ground tactical vehicle mishaps during those three months.

The Army continued to maintain a Class A aviation mishap rate below established norms during FY21. There were eight Class A mishaps reported. For the second year in a row, Army aviation has remained below the once-thought unachievable rate of one Class A flight mishap per 100,000 flying hours.

The Army's manned aviation force averaged four Class A mishaps per year between July and September. The Army addressed this issue with the "4th-Quarter Aviation Spike" campaign, which revealed environmental conditions, as well as personnel and leader turnover, as contributing factors to the increase.

"Our team of Aviation commanders and leaders at all levels remain committed to risk management and driving our numbers to zero," Hilmes said. "We're very optimistic this positive trend will continue."

Off-duty mishaps continue to be the greatest killer of Soldiers, accounting for 87 deaths — a 20% increase from FY20. Army officials partially attribute the increase to off-duty complacency as Soldiers returned to "normal" after nearly a year of COVID-19 restrictions.

"We are placing off-duty mishap prevention as one of our highest priorities for the foreseeable future," said Cmd. Sgt. Major James Light, USACRC command sergeant major. "First-line leaders are our target audience. They are role models and their actions can have a tremendous impact on the wellbeing of their Soldiers. Our challenge is reaching them and better enabling them with tools and information."

The USACRC recently closed out a brief communications campaign targeted toward off-duty risk management during the holiday block leave period, the second-deadliest time of year for mishap fatalities. It included a counseling checklist, news articles on prevalent holiday hazards, and links to popular tools like the Travel Risk Planning System and Off Duty Safety Awareness Presentation.

During the holiday leave period from Nov. 20, 2021 through Jan. 7, 2022, the Army suffered four fatal Soldier off-duty fatalities, down from seven the year prior.

"I'm convinced first-line leaders made this happen through their leadership and engagement," said Light. "For the second year in a row, there were no alcohol-related fatalities. That's the result of Soldiers managing their risk and doing the right thing, and NCOs getting directly involved before their Soldiers depart their units for the holiday."

The complete annual safety assessment is available for download at <https://safety.army.mil/Portals/0/Documents/MEDIA/Standard/Annual-Assessment-FY21.pdf>.