



Independence Day 2022

Looking back to our Nation's birth, our founders knew the United States needed a standing Army well before the signers of the Declaration of Independence put pen to parchment. For 246 years, our independence and freedom have held because of our great Army. Our democracy remains rock solid and, although its future isn't guaranteed, our Army remains at the ready to defend its principles.

As we prepare to celebrate the Independence Day holiday with family and friends, we must also ready ourselves for the most dangerous time of year for Soldiers. For about the past decade, our Army averaged 21 off-duty Soldier fatalities over July and August. Just last year, we lost 28 Soldiers during those two months to off-duty mishaps, most due to private motor vehicle accidents.

Although off-duty Soldier fatalities are currently 30% lower than last year heading into the holiday weekend, we cannot let our guard down and accept this level of loss. A fallen Soldier is a son or daughter, brother or sister, or mother or father. The tragedy tears families apart and degrades unit readiness.

Our Army's junior leaders remain the key to preventing these losses and saving lives, and we can never underestimate the influence their leadership has on their Soldiers' off-duty behaviors. They are truly role models. Going forward, we encourage junior leaders to simply have a discussion about the risks their Soldiers will face in the upcoming months and the techniques to manage those risks. The Off-Duty Safety Awareness Presentation (<https://safety/army.mil/ODSAP>) is a valuable tool to help start those discussions.

Our Soldiers and noncommission officers are the backbone of our great Army and it's their courage, perseverance and sacrifice that has kept our democracy strong and citizens free. Thank you for being a part it. We wish you all a restful, relaxing and enjoyable Independence Day holiday.

People First - Winning Matters - Readiness Through Safety!

James L. Light
Command Sergeant Major

Gene Meredith
Brigadier General, USA
Commanding