

Safety Sends #5 Be Safe - Make It Home

The Acting Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff, Army approved and signed the Army Safety Campaign Plan on 28 April 2004. You can find it on the AKO Web Site and on our Web Site at

<https://safety.army.mil/home.html>. I have seen most of the MACOM initiatives, if you need some help, please shoot me an email or give a call. IAW the CSA P4, TIG will assess the effectiveness of getting the word down to the individual soldier during 4th Qtr.

Big Congrats to North Dakota and their safety programs: 100,000 aviation flight hours without a Class A or B Accident (a span of 46 years); 142nd Engineer BN recently returned from Operation Iraqi Freedom, a year tour with no accidents; 957th Multi-Role Bridge Company: one year in Iraq, 600,000 miles driven, no accidents (suffered 3 KIAs); 141th Engineer BN currently in Iraq, no accidents to date. Wow! Well done...

Memorial Day is just around the corner. Now is a great time to get our Soldiers thinking about driving and recreational risk behavior. There is some good stuff on the Safety Center web site, feel free to add to your own sites or use in safety briefs.

Unfortunately, this was another tough week in two areas: accidental weapons discharges and Army Motor Vehicles (AMV) rollovers. This week we will focus on the accidental discharges, there are some clear indications we also need to look at "speed" in large truck fleet operations. The combination of near-empty vehicle weights, environmental conditions, and speed is putting our truck drivers on the edge of their capabilities.

During the week of 30 April to 6 May 2004, the Army reported nine Class A accidents -- one aviation and eight ground. The results --nine fatalities and two permanent total disabilities.

- There were no aviation fatalities; however, an OH-58C was destroyed.
- Ground fatalities:
 - There were three Army Motor Vehicle rollovers resulting in six fatalities. Seatbelt use is not known at this time for these accidents, but in one incident, the driver of a 5-ton truck did not have an assistant driver.
 - There were two fatalities from accidental weapon discharges. A Soldier had the barrel of his SAW pointing toward him while mounting it on a vehicle, and another Soldier shot himself while cleaning his M9 pistol.
 - A Soldier fell from a 300 foot cliff while mountain climbing without safety equipment.

- Two Soldiers suffered permanent total disabilities in separate motorcycle accidents.

During FY03-04 in Operation Iraqi Freedom, weapons handling errors produced more than 96 reported accidental discharges with 19 fatalities. In-theater, the top five branches with reported accidental weapon discharges: Military Police (14), Infantry (12), Military Intelligence (7), Field Artillery(7) and Armor units(7). Others: Engineers—6, Quartermaster -3, Transportation - 3, Medical Corps - 3, Air Defense - 1, Signal -1 and SOF -1. Remember, ADs were only recorded in our data base if someone was shot or we damaged equipment. Near-misses occurred in the hundreds.... The SMA is taking this head on. Here is what we have learned so far:

- * Basic Soldier skill, but ADs are not limited to junior Soldiers.***
- * Leaders, normally seen as solutions to human-error accidents, are in this case part of the problem. Enlisted grades E-5 and above produced 20 incidents. Six others involved officers and warrant officers.***
- * This is clearly an accident area where individual Soldier discipline, individual accountability, and supervision are essential if we are going to put a stop to these deaths.***

Vignettes -- Accidental discharges... all but one occurred in the last 30 days ...

* A Soldier fatally shot another Soldier at a checkpoint. The Soldier had his M16A2 rifle pointed at the other Soldier's head and inadvertently discharged his weapon. **“Muzzle Awareness, Supervision”**

* An NCO accidentally discharged an M2 MG during positioning of the guard, killing a civilian. **“Weapons handling, Muzzle Awareness”**

* An NCO was cleaning his 9mm pistol when it accidentally discharged, striking him in the head and killing him. **“Weapons Handling, Muzzle Awareness”**

* A Soldier mounting his M249 SAW on a HMMWV and placed himself in front of the weapon. It was loaded and discharged, shooting the Soldier in the abdomen. He later died of the wounds. **“Weapons Handling, Muzzle Awareness, Supervision”**

This is an important message to push all the way to the bottom of our formations. Our Soldiers must understand the impact and accountability of an accidental weapons discharge. One more example... a Soldier allowed children to play with his unloaded M-16. When he retrieved it and reloaded, it discharged and the ricochet killed a child. Not only did the child die, but the Soldier was tried by General Courts-Martial.

Tool kit highlight – Safe Weapons Handling Procedures: There is no difference between unloading and clearing a weapon; unloading is simply one step in the process of clearing. At no time should a weapon be unloaded and not cleared. While this seems common sense, our manuals have been ambiguous and have contributed to confusion as to where and when to conduct these procedures. Working in conjunction with the SMA, a set of straightforward, common-sense standards that account for weapons differences are being finalized Army wide to eliminate the ambiguity. They will be distributed as pocket-size leader guides and Soldier cards issued with each weapon. The final draft can be reviewed at <https://safety.army.mil> in the Quick View box and can be used at leader's discretion now. In addition, the SMA has written several articles in magazines such as Countermeasure, Flightfax, and NCO Journal to emphasize the importance of enforcing clearing procedures. The Flightfax and Countermeasure articles can be found on our Web Site. When approved, the pocket guide will also be published as a poster insert to Flightfax and Countermeasure.

Final thought. Safety Sends is part of the Army Safety Campaign. I hope it is helpful to our leaders. **The goal is to share current information about Army trends so we can quickly focus our efforts and prevent accidents.** Clearly no intent to "poke" anyone in the eye. Some information is taken directly from initial field reports, so make sure the right people are involved in the process. I really appreciate the feed back from the field... keep it coming!

Thanks again to each of you for all you are doing!

Joe Smith
Director of Army Safety