

## U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

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### **SAFETY OFFICIALS LOOK TO LEADERS, BUDDIES TO SPREAD THEIR MESSAGE**

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U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office

**HEIDELBERG, Germany** -- Halfway through summer, there's good news from the U.S. Army Europe Safety Office: Thus far this season, there have been no fatalities in USAREUR as a result of summer activities. To keep up that momentum, safety officials are looking to make spreading the safety message a bit more personal.

This year's USAREUR summer safety campaign is focused on leaders and their interactions with Soldiers, said Dave Scott of the USAREUR Safety Office. "We are trying to develop a 'single safety culture' where people take the right risk management habits from work and apply them wherever they go."

Scott used driving safety as an example of how perceptions and mind-set can result in accidents. "The Army as a whole sees driving as the number-one cause of accidental fatalities," he said. "(In Germany) we have an additional challenge with the autobahn, which brings with it a perception of, 'I can drive as fast as I want.'"

"But what we see is miles in government vehicles without fatalities," he continued. "So why are we only killing ourselves after work? Is it because we enforce speed limits on duty, or is it because our on-duty risk management culture is different than our off-duty culture? Nobody leaves the job site thinking, 'I'm going to go out and get into an accident tonight.' There is a difference between the on- and off-duty cultures and we are focusing our 'engagement' efforts to draw the two cultures together."

"We've put a lot of emphasis on fatalities over the past few years," he said. "Fatalities are easy to count and relatively easy to (analyze). But they represent only the tip of the iceberg."

The Director of Army Safety has reported that Soldier duty time lost to injuries amounts to the equivalent of having five brigades of Soldiers absent from duty each duty day as a result of non-combat-related injuries, Scott explained. But he added that only a minor percentage of those injuries are reported or investigated as accidents.

“We all need to get a handle on that, too,” he said.

Scott said the safety team’s current engagement program works to stem all accidents by focusing on personal contact. He called good leadership and the availability of a leader’s time, as well as the buddy relationship between Soldiers, the most valuable weapons in the fight for safety.

“It’s all about getting involved with those who live or work around you. Sometimes it’s difficult to communicate one-on-one, but it’s those times that mean something,” said Scott.

“It’s the personal contact from the top of the chain of command all the way down through the NCO chain that makes the biggest impact.”

Even more important is the pat on the back that says a Soldier did something right and erred on the side of safety. That sort of leadership instills a sense that safety and the Soldier’s well-being are important, said Scott.

He said simple things like discussing weekend plans or doing vehicle safety “spot checks” are just two ways leaders can let Soldiers know someone cares and help to instill a safe mind-set.

Sgt. Maj. Sal Katz, command sergeant major for the V Corps Special Troops Battalion, is one example of a leader who gets personally involved. Katz periodically stands at exit gates to the posts in the Heidelberg area and ensures drivers who are leaving post wear seat belts and obey traffic laws.

“The first paragraph in the USAREUR commander’s ‘summer safety program intent’ is what motivated me to continue to step out and go to the gate,” said Katz, who hands out safe driver coins to those he catches in the act of being safe.

While Katz is an example of the type of proactive leadership the safety staff says it hopes to encourage in all leaders, Scott says it is still up to individuals to make the right decisions.

“At the end of the day though, it is the individual Soldier who makes the difference in his or her own safety and (the safety) of those around them,” he said.

“It’s the essence of a professional team, and all about being someone’s buddy. There’s no difference between point out a sniper or a potential (improvised explosive device), and taking steps to prevent a teammate from drinking and driving or swimming in a river.”

