

On Leadership: Leaders and Safety
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Editor's note: This is the eighth in a series of articles on leadership by the Commanding General and the Command Sergeant Major.

CG: In USARCENT, we do the mission and protect the force. Everyone in this organization is a leader, and every leader is a safety officer. As the Commanding General, I am the Command's senior safety officer.

CSM: Too often a Soldier is injured or killed because safety standards were not practiced or enforced. We see the reports: Nearly every accident is caused by some combination of indiscipline, overconfidence, lack of training, and complacency.

CG: And accidents that are caused by these factors are preventable. Leaders have an inherent responsibility to know the standard, to make sure their people know the standard, and to enforce the standard. In no area is this more important than in the area of safety. Choosing to violate or ignore a standard sets the conditions for disaster.

CSM: To enforce the standard, leaders supervise. Proper supervision significantly reduces the possibility someone will violate an established standard. First line supervisors have the power to prevent most safety violations by encouraging good judgment and enforcing standards. They know their Soldiers and have the greatest access to them.

CG: With longer days, warmer weather, and well-earned vacations, the opportunity for vehicle accidents increases. I expect leaders at all levels to engage Soldiers and conduct effective travel safety briefs. Use the Travel Risk Planning System (TRiPS), available at the Combat Readiness Center (CRC) web site. This is especially important for motorcycle riders.

CSM: A word about motorcycle safety: The CRC reports that across the Army, privately owned motorcycle fatalities have doubled over the same time period last year. Last summer, 18 Soldiers across the Army lost their lives while riding motorcycles. Tragically, USARCENT recently suffered the loss of a Soldier to this inherently hazardous activity. Emphasize motorcycle safety and proper certification and riding procedures, particularly among your newer and less experienced riders.

CG: We will start a motorcycle mentorship program or a motorcycle board of directors program immediately! This is an opportunity for leaders to take care of Soldiers and pass on their motorcycle safety tips and experience to more inexperienced riders. Leaders need to identify high risk Soldiers and provide them the appropriate counseling and assessment to become a more safety-conscious motorcycle rider.

CG: Soldiers are the most valuable resource for motorcycle safety but there are other proactive measures to help prevent motorcycle accidents. The “Motorcycle Agreement” in the POV Toolbox is a great resource to help prevent accidents and death. There is also no excuse for Soldiers not completing the Travel Risk Planning System (TRiPS) before they go on leave. TRiPS is a mandatory requirement and Soldiers will not go on leave without completing it.

CSM: I agree; Soldiers and their leaders need to ensure TRiPS is utilized. Make sure your Soldiers show up for scheduled mandatory “Motorcycle Safety Sessions.” This is an individual responsibility for your protection, but is also for your jFamily’s benefit. I challenge all leaders to emphasize the importance of motorcycle safety. Know who has a motorcycle or who is thinking of purchasing one; we need to have accountability. This will help save lives!

CSM: As I have said before, safety is the number one thing leaders can affect, positively or negatively. Use the Army Risk Management process. This process ensures leaders and Soldiers, together, are thinking about the hazards they might encounter, and what they need to do to mitigate those hazards. Conducted properly, Risk Management helps set conditions for safe and effective operations – both in non-hostile and combat operations – allowing us to do the mission and protect the force. It is up to each of us, as leaders and Soldiers, to pay attention to what is going on around us. Keep your head up and your eyes open for unsafe acts. It’s part of increasing your area of interest and increasing your area of influence. When your area of interest is wide, your area of influence will be, as well. You’ll take the time out of your day to prevent an accident. Being a leader means having the moral courage to step in and fix something that’s wrong.

CSM: And leaders don’t simply wait until something is going wrong. Leaders promote a culture in which Soldiers understand the importance of good personal risk management. Our continued success in reducing preventable mishaps depends on strong leadership, a culture in which sound personal composite risk management is inherent in everything we do, including in our personal lives. We can’t exclude Families from this process. Protecting the force includes factoring Families and those we care about most in our decision making.

CG: The objective is to create a culture of safety in ARCENT that is second nature. Leaders at every level should make safety an integral part of every operation and include safety in evaluation report support forms, counseling sessions, and overall goals. Second and third level supervisors should be checking to ensure their subordinate leaders know the standards, enforce the standards, and use the Army Risk Management process. Leaders train their people to pay attention to safety by making safety training personal, visual, and focused on activities that affect them. This is just good leadership – and it’s what will keep our people alive.

CSM: Do the mission and protect the force. It’s what we do on this winning team.

-Patton’s Own.