



Short Safety Subject

Short Safety Subjects are provided by the Public Safety Business Center, Fort Bragg, NC. Our intent is to provide safety topics for the purpose of increasing safety awareness and improving safety performance. Additional Short Safety Subjects are available on the PSBC Business Management Web Site at:

www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm

Driving Tips To Arrive Alive

In the first half of FY01, the number of Class A privately owned vehicle (POV) accidents within the Army was reduced nearly 30 percent from the previous year. At the mid-point of last year, the Army reported 57 Class A POV accidents compared to 42 reported this year. The reduction in these accidents is good news; however, we are still having too many preventable POV accidents. The Safety Center analyzed all Class A POV accidents occurring this year and found no surprises in the types of accidents. Driving while fatigued was the number one cause of accidents, followed by excessive speed. Both have historically been two of the top reasons for POV accidents.

Fatigue - One soldier planned on riding his motorcycle throughout the night to his next duty station. What he did not plan on was falling asleep while riding. Unfortunately, that is exactly what happened. At approximately 0500, he completely missed a curve in the road, went through a guardrail, and struck a concrete pole. The soldier was killed instantly.

Countermeasures

- **Get sufficient sleep prior to a long drive.** Adequate sleep is more effective in keeping a driver alert than any other measure. Don't plan a long trip immediately following a full workday.
- **Limit your driving between midnight and 0600.** Your body is normally asleep during this time period, not driving. **Plan for rest stops.** At a minimum, plan for 15 minutes of rest for every 2 hours of driving. If you are even slightly tired, plan for a break every hour.
- **Stop driving when you are tired;** find a hotel or place to rest, or let someone else drive who is rested.
- **Take a break for a short nap.** A 15-20 minute nap has been shown to improve alertness even among sleep-deprived test subjects.
- **Don't rely on caffeine to get you to your destination.** Caffeine only has a short-term effect on alertness. If you are relying on caffeine to finish a trip, you are raising your risk factors to unacceptable levels.

Speed - Driving too fast can lead to equally disastrous results. One soldier was going too fast on an expressway off-ramp. The vehicle began to slide until it struck the guardrail, causing the vehicle to rollover several times. During this sequence, the driver was ejected from the vehicle

and killed. The driver was not wearing his seatbelt. Driving too fast caused the accident; not wearing a seatbelt cost him his life.

Countermeasures

- **Slow down.** Don't be in a hurry to be the next Army accidental fatality.
- **Use your seatbelt.** This is your last line of defense to save your life if you have an accident. AR 385-55, *Prevention of Motor Vehicle Accidents*, requires seatbelt use whenever operating a motor vehicle, both on-and off-post.

When driving a motorcycle, wear all the required safety equipment, particularly the helmet. Although some states do not have helmet laws, AR 385-55 requires Army personnel to wear a Department of Transportation-approved helmet whenever operating or riding a motorcycle. Historically, the summer months are the worst months for POV accidents. Soldiers will be taking leave and driving home or to vacation spots with the family. Warm weather and longer days increase the number of motorcycles on the roads. While you are driving this summer, keep in mind the lessons learned by others driving the first half of this year. Don't drive when you are tired, and slow down so that you arrive safely. We still have a long way to go until the end of the year. Make a commitment to drive and ride safely every time you get in a vehicle.