

FATALITY



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS III CORPS AND FORT HOOD
FORT HOOD, TEXAS 76544-5056



AFZF-GA-SAFE

22 January 2002

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: POV Accident/Fatality Prevention – Fatality Memo 02-04

1. A fatal POV accident tragically erased the life of another III Corps soldier this past Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend. The adverse impact will be felt by everyone around him for some time. Family, friends, and peers will undoubtedly grieve and miss the soldier. Leaders and the Army will also miss him from a both a personal and readiness perspective.
2. This soldier was the fifth one lost due to POV accidents so far this fiscal year. According to initial police statements, the soldier fell asleep at the wheel, veered off of the road, and struck a median pole. The statements also reflect that he had not been drinking and was wearing seatbelts. While the exact facts and circumstances of this weekend's fatality are not yet known, preliminary findings indicate fatigue as the major factor. The soldier most likely arose very early to attend Sergeant's Time Training and then immediately upon release departed on an approximate 500-mile road trip. Leaders must ensure that soldiers are not allowed to start a long POV trip after having worked all day. As a minimum, leaders must insist that soldiers agree to stop after driving part way.
3. The Corps went almost 60 days from late November to this past weekend without an accidental fatality -- all through the busy winter holiday season. I am convinced that this is the result of leaders' holiday safety emphasis and the resulting responsible actions by soldiers. Commanders must continue to perpetuate the safety message down to the lowest level, infusing it with fresh ideas. Our first line leaders are the best defense against tragic accidental loss of life. Almost every POV accident is preventable; leaders should not rest until they are satisfied that they have worked every avenue and are sure that their soldiers have "gotten and are complying with the message."
4. This weekend's accident is in line with several of the four historically common factors that almost all POV accidents/fatalities share: excessive speed, fatigue, alcohol, and / or not wearing seatbelts. These factors were true 30 years ago, and are still true today. Commanders and first line leaders must intervene to break the tragic cycle. Ensure soldiers get adequate rest before departing on a long drive. Include this in your leave SOP and enforce it. Successful outfits have POV safety programs that incorporate engaged leadership, proper focus, and discipline.

ENSURE WIDEST DISSEMINATION AND POST ON BULLETIN BOARD

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'B. B. Bell'.

B. B. BELL
Lieutenant General, USA
Commanding

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