

FATALITY



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

AFZF-GA-SAFE

29 October 2002

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: POV Fatalities Continue Into the New Fiscal Year -- Fatality Memo 03-01

1. Only 19 days into the new fiscal year, III Corps lost another soldier in a preventable automobile crash. We don't have all the facts and circumstances surrounding this accident yet; but we have some information that we can use for lessons learned. This latest tragedy involved a soldier who embarked on a long weekend trip, when it was abruptly cut short by a fatal accident in Kentucky. We are not sure yet how far the soldier intended to travel on the regular 2-day weekend. We do know that he had driven almost 800 miles from his duty station when the fatal crash occurred. He was not on pass or leave. The accident occurred on Saturday, in mid afternoon. According to police information, the soldier was speeding on a wet road when he lost control and crashed into a telephone pole on the driver side. Fatigue must be a suspect in this case. Luckily, his passenger survived with only minor injuries. Both wore their seatbelts, which probably saved the passenger from receiving more serious injuries. Potential alcohol and drug involvement is not yet known.

2. This unfortunate death is a prime example of why we need leaders to be fully engaged in their soldiers' weekend travel plans. Apparently, in this case, the soldier did not inform his leaders of his plans to travel a long distance on a regular, 2-day weekend. Maybe the soldier did not want to tell his leader his extensive travel plans for fear of the leader intervening and denying the soldier to embark on such a long trip in the short time available. We just don't know. Simple mathematics and common sense tells us that traveling 800 plus miles to and from your destination in a 2-day weekend is not safe - in fact, it is reckless.

3. With this latest POV fatality last weekend, we are getting off to a negative start for the new fiscal year. In FY02, we actually reduced the number of POV fatalities to 17, from the 22 of the previous year. What commanders and leaders should be especially concerned about is that we are at the leading edge of the holiday travel season during which many POV accidents have traditionally occurred. I need commanders to aggressively attack their Winter Holiday 2002 Safety Campaigns and charge their subordinate leaders to coach and mentor their soldiers on POV accident prevention techniques. We have four holidays/long weekends coming up in November and December, which require our undivided safety attention in order to prevent more accidental losses. Have your leaders "beat the bushes" to find innovative POV safety programs and train their soldiers on accident avoidance. As a minimum, your leaders need to go to the Army Safety Center web site (<http://safety.army.mil/home.html>) and research POV safety ideas to use. I want to point out two programs on the Safety Center web site. One is the "POV TOOL BOX" which contains many excellent POV accident prevention ideas such as leader/soldier contracts and pre-trip briefings/checklists. The other program I want to mention is the Chief of Staff of the Army's Six-Point POV Safety Program which emphasizes command involvement, discipline assurance, risk management, and standards compliance. In the end, experience tells us that engaged battalion commanders and CSMs, empowering first line leaders, make the difference in putting a halt to POV deaths.

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

B. B. BELL
Lieutenant General, USA
Commanding

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