

## SUMMER SAFETY TOPICS

1. General. Summer is a time when people engage in many outdoor activities with their families and friends, such as barbecuing, hiking, motorcycle riding, sunbathing, traveling and water sports. Unfortunately, summer also is a time that has been associated with increased preventable fatalities and injuries related to these activities. This enclosure provides information for commanders and supervisors to use during their summer safety briefings to increase the awareness of summer recreational hazards. Safety days, wellness clinics and safety showdown games are effective ways to provide information to Soldiers, civilian employees and family members.

### 2. Water Safety.

a. Alcohol and Water Activities Do Not Mix. More than half of all fatalities involving water activities are alcohol-related.

(1) Alcohol has many physical effects on people that directly threaten their safety and well-being when they are involved in activities on or around water.

- Cognitive abilities and judgment deteriorate, making it harder to process information, assess situations and make good choices.
- Physical performance is impaired, including balance problems, lack of coordination and increased reaction time.
- Vision is affected. This includes decreased peripheral vision, reduced depth perception, decreased night vision, poor focus and difficulty distinguishing colors (particularly red and green).
- Inner-ear disturbances can make it impossible for a person who falls into the water to distinguish up from down.
- Alcohol creates a physical sensation of warmth, which may prevent a person in cold water from getting out before hypothermia sets in.

(2) Because of the above physical effects, a boat operator with a blood alcohol concentration of higher than 0.10 percent is estimated to be more than 10 times as likely to die in a boating accident than an operator who has not consumed alcohol. Passengers are also at a much greater risk of injury and death, especially if they also are drinking alcoholic beverages.

b. Boating. Many Soldiers and family members will be boating this summer. The rules governing the use of boats vary. In some areas, no experience is required to pilot a boat, while other areas require testing and training at some level. Regardless of where you use a boat, hazards are present that need to be understood and avoided to reduce the risk of death or injury.

(1) According to the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG):

- 76 million Americans participate in recreational boating each year. On average, more than 800 Americans die each year from boating accidents. Seventy percent of those fatalities occur between May and September with July as the deadliest month.
- Seventy-seven percent of all fatalities on the water involve people not wearing personal floatation devices (PFDs).
- Young males are at greatest risk: those from age 20 to 39 account for the vast majority of boating accidents each year.

(2) Commanders should emphasize the following keys to safe boating:

- Every boater should wear a PFD.
- Alcohol and boating are a dangerous combination, and alcohol should not be part of the outing. More than half of all boating accidents are alcohol-related.
- All boaters should take a course in boating safety.

c. Water-Skiing. Do not take unnecessary risks while water-skiing. The following tips will help you safely enjoy this sport:

- Always have an observer in the boat (This is a legal requirement). The boat driver cannot watch the skier and operate the boat safely at the same time.
- Always wear a USCG-approved PFD designed for water-skiing. Ski belts are not recommended. Your approved PFD will help keep you afloat.
- Never ski in rough water. High waves or a choppy sea will prevent the towboat from maintaining a steady course and speed.
- Stay well clear of congested areas and obstructions. Water-skiing requires a lot of open area.
- Do not spray or "buzz" swimmers, boats or other skiers. Such stunts are dangerous, discourteous and could cause an unintentional collision.
- Never ski after dark. It is hazardous and illegal. Any boat traveling fast enough to tow a skier is traveling too fast to navigate safely at night.
- Never water-ski while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Such activity is extremely dangerous because of the impairment to your judgment and ability to respond. A recent study conducted with expert skiers who were deliberately intoxicated indicated that even their ability to ski was dramatically reduced.

- Use hand signals between the skier and the observer. Agree before you start what each signal means so there is no confusion at a critical moment.
- Keep away from crowded beaches, docks, swimming areas, rocks and bridge pilings.

d. Swimming. Every year someone dies or is severely injured as a result of a swimming accident. These accidents are preventable. Inexperience, lack of supervision, unfamiliar water, horseplay and alcohol use are the most common factors in these accidents. Swimming in rivers can be extremely dangerous because of swift currents and boating traffic. The water can also be cold, which increases the chance of hyperthermia. Public swimming pools are generally considered safer than open-water swimming areas.

(1) Drowning. Most drowning occurs within 10 yards of shore. Learning to swim and understanding water hazards can increase your chances of survival. Here are some tips:

- Never swim alone. Swim with a friend at all times.
- Swim in a safe place, preferably one with lifeguards.
- Do not swim when overheated, tired, or chilled, or during a storm.
- Do not dive into unfamiliar waters or try to swim in unfamiliar river currents.
- Always empty "kiddie" pools when not in use. Maintain close supervision when in use.
- Learn basic water-rescue and water-survival techniques to help drowning victims and to protect yourself.
- Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to help drowning victims.
- Remember that alcohol does not mix with swimming.
- Most importantly, know your swimming ability. PFDs should be worn by inexperienced swimmers in unfamiliar or deep water.

(2) Rescue Techniques. The Red Cross creed for lifesaving involves four steps in the following order: reach, throw, row, and go. (Do not try the next step until you are sure that the previous step will not work.):

- Reach. First try to reach to the person. Use your hand or anything else that can be held onto, such as a belt, a fishing pole, a jacket, an oar or a rope.
- Throw. If you cannot reach the person, throw something to him or her that will float, such as a ball, a beach toy, a picnic cooler, a piece of wood, a plastic bottle or a spare tire.

- Row. If the person is too far away, go to him or her by using an air mattress, a log, a raft, a small boat, a surfboard, or anything else that you can row or paddle with your hands.
- Go. If you are unable to reach the person using the above three steps, swim out and tow him or her to shore, but only if you are a good swimmer and trained in lifesaving techniques.

3. Hiking. A favorite summer activity is hiking, but it should be carefully planned. Tell someone where you will be hiking and when you expect to return. Check the weather forecast to avoid bad weather. Establish a leader and a plan for changes. Carry a map and compass and stay on a marked path. Carry a whistle (three short blasts is the international signal for help in an emergency). Wear clothing appropriate for the activity and the weather, preferably clothing made of natural fibers. Long sleeves and full-length pants will protect you from insects, the sun and brush. Wear hiking boots or good, sturdy walking shoes that are broken in. Hike in small groups of less than 10 people. Carry a first-aid kit. Take advantage of the excellent guided trips through your local morale, welfare and recreation office or Armed Forces Recreation Center.

#### 4. Mountain Biking.

a. General. The mountain-biking information provided here is for the beginner off-road cyclist. Included is important basic information on equipment, courtesy, safety, technique and trail rules. Rules governing safety and courtesy are important for the well-being and enjoyment of all trail users. The International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) has set the following rules of the trail:

- Ride on open trails only. Respect trail and road closures.
- Leave no trace. Be sensitive to the trail. Examples of when cyclists can cause significant trail damage are when they skid their tires and when they ride on muddy trails.
- Control your bicycle. Inattention for even a second can cause problems. Watch your speed. Remember that what seems a reasonable speed to you may seem out of control to a hiker or someone on horseback. Slow down or stop when approaching other trail users, even if there is plenty of room. If another trail user moves out of the trail in fear, they may believe they were run off the trail.
- Always yield the trail. Make your approach known well in advance. Do not startle others. A friendly greeting (or a bell) is considerate and works well. Show respect when passing others by slowing to a walk or stopping. Anticipate that other trail users may be around corners or in blind spots. When approaching horseback riders, stop and get off. Yield to uphill bike traffic, fellow cyclists traveling uphill on a narrow trail have the right of way. Stop and let them go by if you are traveling downhill.

- Never startle animals. An unannounced approach, a sudden movement, or a loud noise can startle animals. Give animals extra room and time to adjust to your presence.
- Plan ahead. Know your equipment, your ability and the area in which you plan to ride and prepare accordingly. Be self-sufficient at all times. Wear a helmet, keep your bike in good condition and carry necessary supplies for changes in weather or other conditions.

b. Required Equipment. The following equipment is required for safety:

- For off-road riding, you should buy a true mountain bike, not a hybrid. An appropriately sized mountain bike usually will have at least 2 to 4 inches of room between the top of the frame and your crotch when you stand above the bike. You should be able to reach the handlebars in such a way that you can bend over at a 45-degree angle without feeling cramped. The height of the stem should be adjusted to put the handlebars slightly below the saddle, which allows some of your weight to shift to the front of the bike for a more balanced position. The saddle should be set at a height so that you can almost completely extend your legs when you place your heels on the pedals in their lowest position.
- Wear appropriate clothing for the weather and riding conditions. Wear an approved helmet. Padded bicycling shorts are more practical on a bike than loose-fitting shorts, and the chamois prevents chaffing. Gloves will keep you from compressing nerves in your hand and getting blisters; in case of a fall, they will protect your skin. Wear mountain-bike shoes. You can ride in tennis shoes, but the soles are not stiff enough to provide enough comfort (pedals dig into soles) or firm enough to allow you to shift the power when pedaling. Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes from both the sun and dust. Wear or carry a windbreaker or light jacket.
- Carry two water bottles or one of the alternative water systems such as a CamelBack. Drink water to prevent dehydration. Carry a pump that fits the type of tire valve on your bike. Carry spare tubes and tire irons in case you get a flat on the trail. A small screwdriver is handy for adjusting derailleurs. A small crescent wrench, metric wrenches, and Allen wrenches are needed for removing wheels without a quick-release and a number of other uses. A chain tool for fixing a broken chain and a spoke wrench for tightening loose spokes or removing broken ones are recommended. Carry a first-aid kit.

5. Jogging. Always jog in areas away from vehicle traffic when possible. If not, always jog against traffic so you can see and be seen. Wear bright clothing and a retroreflective belt or material to increase your visibility. Do not forget to warm up, stretch and cool down. Remember that wearing headphones on sidewalks and roadways while jogging is not permitted IAW AR 385-55.

6. Bicycle Safety.

a. Each year, more than 500,000 people in the United States are treated in emergency rooms for injuries caused by bicycle accidents. More than 700 people die from bicycle-related injuries. Children are at particularly high risk of bicycle-related injuries. Children under the age of 15 account for 59 percent of all bicycle-related injuries. Two-thirds of all bicycle-related deaths are due to traumatic brain injury. One in every eight people injured in bicycle-related accidents suffer brain injuries. Over 90 percent of all bicycle-related deaths involve collisions with motor vehicles. Motorists are most often at fault in causing bicycle-related accidents. Motorists must remember that cyclists have the right of way when riding straight ahead or in a bike lane. Motorists must "clear behind the rear" when turning right or crossing a bike lane.

b. It is estimated that 45 to 88 percent of all brain injuries in bicycle-related crashes can be prevented by properly wearing an approved bicycle helmet. AR 385-55 requires bicycle riders to wear helmets.

c. Defensive driving and wearing an approved bicycle helmet are the best accident-prevention measures. Other keys to avoiding accidents include using established bike paths, riding with traffic in single file, properly using hand signals to indicate your intentions, wearing bright clothing, wearing retroreflective materials during reduced visibility, using the lights on your bike, watching out for motorists, and following traffic rules. Police can and will cite bicyclists for traffic violations.

## 7. In-Line Skates, Skateboards and Scooters.

a. General. In-line skates and skateboards have been part of our culture for many years. However, today's wheels are faster and the skates are getting more sophisticated. Unfortunately, the people using them are not aware of or familiar with these innovations and lack proper training.

(1) Each year more than 100,000 people are injured while in-line skating. Fractures to the wrist and lower arm account for nearly half of all injuries to skaters. Lacerations, abrasions, head injuries, and contusions are also a danger. Proper equipment helps reduce the chance of injuries. Gloves should also be worn to help prevent scrapes and cuts.

(2) To help avoid injury:

- Avoid buying cheap skates. Get good-quality equipment. Go to a store with salespeople knowledgeable about in-line skates and equipment.
- Purchase the proper skates (or boots) based on your skating experience and exercise goals. An in-line skate boot should fit snugly but allow for a little extra toe room in the front.
- Wear a thin liner sock of silk or polypropylene under a medium-weight athletic sock. Thick, all-cotton socks do not keep the feet dry and can cause blisters and other foot problems.

- Take lessons before you skate. Learn to skate on a smooth, paved surface away from traffic and crowds.
- Know how to stop before you start. The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends the following technique: Stop by using the brake pads at the heel of the skate. With one foot slightly in front of the other, raise the toes of the front foot and push down on the heel brake. Brake before, not after, you lose control.

b. Skateboards. Most of the 50,000 skateboard injuries each year involve children under the age of 15. The protective clothing described above for in-line skaters is also required for skateboarders. Skateboarders also may want to use hip pads for added protection. To reduce the risk of injuries:

- Do not ride a skateboard in the street.
- Never hitch a ride on the bumper of a moving vehicle.
- Examine the area where you will be skateboarding for bumps, debris, holes and rocks before you ride.
- Look for areas designed for skateboards in your community.

c. Scooters. The Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that more than 40,000 people were taken to emergency rooms last year in the United States because of injuries resulting from riding a scooter. Most of the injuries were to children under 15. To help prevent injuries when riding scooters:

- Wear safety gear (helmet, elbow pads, and knee pads).
- Ride only during the daytime.
- Ride only on paved off-road paths.
- Stay away from cars and other vehicles.
- Stay on smooth surfaces and away from dirt, gravel, sand and water.

## 8. Grilling.

a. Gas Grill Safety. Liquid petroleum (LP) gas or propane used in gas grills is highly flammable. Each year, people are injured by gas-grill fires and explosions. Many of these fires and explosions occur when people first use a grill that has not been used for w while or just after they have refilled and reattached the grill's gas container.

(1) To reduce the risk of fire or explosion, routinely make the following safety checks:

- Check the tubes that lead into the burner for any blockage from food grease, insects or spiders. Use a pipe cleaner or wire to clear blockage and push it through to the main part of the burner.
- Check grill hoses for brittleness, cracks, holes and leaks. Make sure that the hoses and tubing have no sharp bends.
- Move gas hoses as far away as possible from hot surfaces and dripping hot grease. If you cannot move the hoses, install a heat shield to protect them.
- Replace scratched or nicked connectors, which eventually can cause gas to leak.
- Check for gas leaks following the manufacturer's instructions if you smell gas and when you reconnect the grill to the LP gas container. If you detect a leak, immediately turn off the gas and do not attempt to light the grill until the leak is fixed.
- Keep lighted cigarettes, matches and open flames away from a leaking grill.
- Never use a grill indoors. Use the grill at least 10 feet away from any building. Do not use the grill in a breezeway, carport, garage, porch or under a surface that can catch fire.
- Do not attempt to repair the tank valve or the appliance yourself. See an LP gas dealer or a qualified appliance repairperson if repairs are needed.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions that come with the grill.

(2) Use caution when storing LP gas containers. Always keep containers upright. Never store a spare gas container under or near the grill or indoors. Never store or use flammable liquids, like gasoline, near the grill.

(3) To avoid accidents while transporting LP gas containers, transport the container in a secure, upright position. Never keep a filled container in a hot car or car trunk. Heat will cause the gas pressure to increase, which may open the relief valve and allow gas to escape.

(4) Use extreme caution and always follow manufacturer's instructions when connecting or disconnecting LP gas containers.

(5) According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, gas grills manufactured after 1 October 1995 are required to have three additional safety features to eliminate leak hazards: a device to limit the flow of gas in case of hose rupture, a mechanism to shut off the grill and a feature to prevent the flow of gas if the connection between the tank and the grill is not leakproof.

b. Charcoal Grill Safety. When it burns, charcoal produces carbon monoxide (CO). CO is a colorless, odorless gas that can accumulate to toxic levels in closed environments. People die

and are injured every year as a result of CO fumes from charcoal grills and hibachis used inside buildings.

(1) To help prevent CO poisoning:

- Never burn charcoal inside campers, homes, tents or vehicles. Charcoal should never be used indoors, even with ventilation.
- Do not store the grill indoors with freshly used coals. Charcoal produces CO fumes until the charcoal is completely extinguished.

(2) In April 1996, the Consumer Product Safety Commission revised the label on charcoal packaging to provide more explicit warning to consumers of the deadly CO gas that is released when charcoal is burned in a closed environment. The new label reads, "WARNING...CARBON MONOXIDE HAZARD...Burning charcoal inside can kill you. It gives off carbon monoxide, which has no odor. Never burn charcoal inside homes, vehicles or tents." the new label also conveys the written warning visually with drawings of grills inside a home, tent and vehicle. The drawings are enclosed in a circle with an "X" through it.