



19 July 2004



Driving Safety and Defensive-Driving Techniques

1. Two more USAREUR Soldiers have died in car crashes in Europe. One was killed in a controlled intersection—in which he had the right of way—when his vehicle struck another that had entered the intersection. The other died when he hit a vehicle in front of him and was deflected into oncoming traffic.
2. Everyone understands the dangers associated with unsafe driving practices, such as running red lights or passing without adequate visibility. But following the rules of the road alone is not enough to avoid accidents; and having the right of way does not guarantee that other drivers will respect that right. To protect themselves from being involved in vehicle accidents, including those caused by others, all drivers in Europe must learn and practice defensive-driving techniques.
3. Defensive-driving training—also called accident-avoidance training—provides valuable tools to help drivers identify and manage risks caused by others on the road. These tools include continuous observation and assessment, mental wargaming, and deliberate adjustment to help avoid getting involved in dangerous situations with other drivers. These training objectives help drivers sharpen their ability to identify potential risks, think through to possible outcomes, and identify actions that would give them an “out” if they should need it.
4. In addition to using defensive-driving techniques, drivers can help avoid accidents by observing the following basic safety measures:
 - Pay attention, concentrate on driving, and continuously watch for potential hazards. This includes avoiding conditions that reduce your ability to concentrate (such as driving when drowsy or talking on a cell phone) or that cause you to take your eyes off the road.
 - Recognize and take action to avoid risky situations.
 - Observe safe separation distances between vehicles.
 - Continuously evaluate “what if” escape paths and maneuvers.
 - Maintain vehicle control by using correct emergency-braking and steering techniques.
 - Be prepared for anything to happen.

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5. The USAREUR Safety Web site at <http://www.per.hqusareur.army.mil/services/safetydivision/main.htm> provides valuable information that drivers can use to avoid accidents. The Army Wheeled Vehicle Accident Avoidance Program, which is also available on the Web site, provides good individual defensive-driving training. All drivers are encouraged to review this Web site and take advantage of these resources.

6. Vehicle fatalities remain our biggest threat and our most important risk-management target. In the past, POV crashes accounted for 60 percent of all accidental fatalities in USAREUR. So far this year, POV crashes account for almost 90 percent of our accidental fatalities. Commanders must ensure that their personnel stay alert and use defensive-driving techniques as we continue to execute with excellence, Any Mission, Anywhere! I want you to share this Bell Sends with your entire chain of command and your Soldiers / civilian employees. Ensure you use this message as part of your safety awareness and fatality prevention programs.



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