



Med-Alert

The 5th Brigade (HS) Newsletter

November 2001
Volume 21



THE COLONEL'S CORNER

THANKSGIVINGS SAFETY MESSAGE

Many of us will be visiting friends and relatives during the Thanksgiving Holiday and perhaps traveling long distances. The 5th Brigade family wants you back safe and sound after the holidays, first the old saying "don't drink and drive" give up the wheel if you have had anything to drink. Rest if you are traveling long distances, pull off the side of the road and stretch. Take a break. Remember to use your seat belts particularly with those little ones. Also watch what your speed and watch what you eat, don't throw away all that hard work out and hours of physical training for some turkey and stuffing.

SMA THOUGHTS-N-CONCERNS

These are busy days for all of us, but I recently sat through a briefing that made me pause and do some thinking. The briefing was on safety, and I'm again asking for your help.

If I can, I'd like to share with you what kept going through my mind as the briefer talked us through the slides, shared stories and statistics.

During FY01, we learned 168 Soldiers died from accidents. In my mind, I could see a company formation -- a big, 168-person company. I imagined each of those Soldiers dead, I tried to envision that same number of funerals and headstones . . . and I wondered how many friends, spouses, children, parents and loved ones that big of a formation represented. I was left saddened and determined . . . as in determined to put the word out and make a difference.

Some of our Soldiers may regard safety as an issue mainly impacting the TO&E Army. They say to themselves, "my unit doesn't have motor pools, we

don't go to NTC and we don't deploy." However, in reality everyone who works with Soldiers and civilians face safety related issues. Our Soldiers and civilians face possible injury every day, performing tasks that are required for them to successfully perform their respective real world missions. We must remain vigilant in combating the enemy of safety complacency in enforcement of standards.

Safety, in short, is not just an issue for the go-to-war Army. It's a soldier issue, a civilian issue, and it's an Active Army as well as a Reserve Component issue. In the case of many safety related deaths, it was painfully obvious the cause was preventable, and that the person in the position most able to have prevented it was the dead soldier's first-line supervisor . . . A sergeant. In more cases than I care to recall, something as simple as a seatbelt, a helmet, a ground guide or \$20 worth of flashlights and road guard vests could have saved lives and prevented injuries. In other cases, adequate risk assessments, safety briefings, spot checks and closer involvement from an experienced leader would have likely been enough.

Anyone doubting this or wanting more specifics, the answer may lie no further than your dayroom's coffee table or your safety officer's in-box.

Each month, the Army Safety Center puts out its "Countermeasure" magazine, and they never fail to contain eye-opening examples of how poor discipline, poor planning, poor preparation and poor leadership all contribute to far too many deaths. The center also runs an excellent Internet site at <http://safety.army.mil>.

I'd like for each of us to do all we can to ensure safety gets the visibility it deserves in our training, in our planning and in the execution of everything we do. In the past seven-or-so weeks, I've sat in a number of church pews near flag-draped coffins that contained the remains of Soldiers and civilians killed in the 11 Sept. attack on the Pentagon.

Sitting at the service and the graveside remembrances, I've felt the pain of these families and looked into the eyes of parents, spouses and children as they were handed the flag from their Soldiers' coffin.

It will take all of us -- from private to sergeant major and lieutenant to general -- to make a difference. The upcoming holiday season would be a good time to point out that safety impacts more than just what we do on ranges, in our motor pools and training areas. Alcohol, speed, carelessness, snow-covered roads, fatigue and other factors combine each year to claim far too many lives. Our behavior and how we



conduct ourselves in adverse conditions are the factors that we can favorably impact with proper emphasis going into the holidays.

In addition to safety we should also add suicide prevention to our list of avoidable occurrences. During the briefing I spoke of a moment ago, I was shocked to learn that a platoon of Soldiers - 40 to be precise - had their deaths categorized as either suicides or suspected suicides so far in 2001. Perhaps not all of these could have been prevented, but I'm left wondering if a concerned word, a timely counseling or simply a kind gesture could have been enough to make a difference to some of these Soldiers. I'm no doubt preaching to the choir and a great many of you are in units where safety is priority one. But, even a single suicide or accidental death is one too many. September the 11th was a hard day for us all, but it was prevented from being more tragic by the selfless acts of valor displayed by our fellow Soldiers and civilians.



Late in October, Army Secretary White, Vice Chief of Staff - Gen. Keane and I saluted our heroes by presenting them with the Soldiers Medal, the Defense of Freedom Medal and other medals for their courageous actions at the Pentagon. These brave men and women ignored danger, uncertainty and pain to come to the aid of their fallen comrades, just as Americans have performed on battlefields for more than 226 years. We should be proud of each of them.

On Oct. 9, I was proud of the NCO Corps for a different reason. During a funeral for a soldier who died in the Sept. 11 attack on the Pentagon, I witnessed an act that - at least to me - epitomized our role in enforcing standards.

During the graveside portion of the funeral, Old Guard 1st Sgt. Robert Watson was set to receive the freshly folded American flag from the casket when he noticed a flaw. Few people watching would have noticed the flaw, and 1st Sgt. Watson might've been able to cover it with his hand. But, while the family waited and before a number of VIPs - including the Army Chief of Staff - the first sergeant signaled for the flag to be refolded, a process that took several minutes. I was deeply impressed by 1st Sgt. Watson's willingness to enforce standards, no matter how small the infraction or who was watching. I'd like us to let 1st Sgt. Watson be our example as we strive to never overlook a safety violation or walk past an opportunity to use our

positions and experience to ratchet up on safety and develop procedures, to identify and assist those that are in despair.

Together, we can take this on and make a difference simply by beginning to ask ourselves "when can I talk about safety," as opposed to "when must I talk about safety."

FROM THE S-3 AND SSA

MOBILIZATION - The soldiers that were mobilized to augment the Army Medical Department Center and School are doing a fantastic job in representing the 5th Brigade (HS), 95th Division. They are being great ambassadors for the USAR, their unit, and themselves. After in-processing and getting assignments, most of them are now totally integrated into the Active Component. They are basically divided in two groups, one group is assigned to the 232nd Medical Battalion to teach 91W and the other is assigned to the Academy Battalion to teach low density medical MOS.

The soldiers who are from out of town are all residing on post and those who live in San Antonio are, of course, commuting on a daily basis. The Division Commanding General has visited twice since the deployment and has been pleased with the manner in which they are being utilized and treated. The challenge that we have as a unit is insuring that the families that are left behind are kept informed and taken care of properly.

91W TRANSITION - The 5th Brigade (HS), 95th Division (IT) continues to be at the forefront for USAR 91W transition courses. We are currently scheduled to start teaching NR EMT/B in 9 locations between now and January 02. The locations are: San Antonio, El Paso, Omaha, Oklahoma City, Austin, Albuquerque, Little Rock, Ft Leonard Wood and Iowa City. By mid-02 we will expand to Houston, Dallas, and New Orleans. All units in the brigade are contributing instructors and knowledge, especially since the mobilization of 10th Battalion instructors. Transition is not only EMT courses, it also involves, Trauma AIMS and PHTLS, which are being taught by the PND. The 3457th MTC will teach the EMT Bridge course in the near future.

Every soldier in the 5th Brigade who is a 91B/C should have already taken the courses to transition, if you have not, ask your chain of command to enroll you in the necessary course to become a fully transitioned 91W.



OTHER MISSIONS - Although it is November we are already thinking and making preparations for summer 2002 missions. The summer time is our prime period for teaching and all our units run their Annual Training then. This week we are meeting with all the Full Time Staff to make tentative assignments for all courses being taught the rest of the year. You as an instructor should be contacting your OIC/NCOIC to determine when and what your involvement will be. If you are not an instructor but a staff member you will also play an integral role in AT. This year the Brigade will deploy an Annual Training support cell, which will consist of representatives from every brigade staff section.

PROMOTION BOARDS - The Senior Enlisted Promotion Boards dates for both RSCs have been published and will be conducted in January and February 02. Our Brigade alone will advertise 37 vacancies. This means that across both RSC there will be many slots to be filled. The key is to put a professional packet that will sell the soldier to the board, spend time reviewing the packet, send the most updated information, and have all records checked.

AKO ARMY KNOWLEDGE ONLINE ACCOUNT - Every soldier, reservist and Army civilian is now required to have an Army Knowledge Online account by October 1, 2001. Obviously the deadline has already passed so this message is more of a reminder. It is very simple to register, just go to www.army.mil and find the link that says army knowledge online and follow the instructions to get an account.

DRILL ACTIVITIES - One of the major reasons for soldiers leaving their units and the USAR is the inability of the chain of command to provide them with a framework in which they can be productive during drills. It starts with accountability, if the NCOIC and OIC don't even care whether the soldier is in the unit then why should the soldier even bother to show up. Next we as leaders need to make sure that each and every soldier has an assignment that is appropriate and that contributes to the overall accomplishment of the unit's mission, again this requires chain of command involvement at the lowest level. How many of you NCOICs and OICs will have task lists for every soldier in your section to do over drill??? Keep your soldiers gainfully employed and they will stay in the unit.

90-DAY EVENT CALENDAR

November	
17 th - 18 th	HQ's, PND & 10 th Battalion Drill
22 nd	Thanksgiving Holiday
December	
1 st - 2 nd	5 th Brigade Logistics Conference
1 st	Yearly Strategic Briefing Rehearsals
1 st - 2 nd	Project Management Workshop
8 th - 9 th	All Units Drill
8 th - 9 th	Yearly Strategic Briefing Rehearsal
25 th	Christmas Holiday
January	
1 st	New Years Holiday
12 th - 13 th	All units drill
22 nd - 25 th	Mobilization Course
25 th - 26 th	YSB to Division

YOUR CHAIN OF COMMAND

5th Brigade (HS)	
COL Angel Padilla	CSM Alfred Habelman
10th Battalion	
MAJ James Hickey	Vacant
3457th	
LTC Floyd Priester	CSM Blanca Ramirez
Practical Nurse Detachment	
MAJ Mary Gomez	Vacant
HHD - 5th Brigade (HS)	
CPT Mario Avila	MSG Dan Carlin





"THE TRAVELER" (NOVEMBER 2001) EXTRACT

Holiday Processing

We strongly recommend you submit all pre-holiday travel claims as soon as travel is completed. This will allow us the opportunity to process your travel claims as expeditiously as possible.

Contact your Travel Pay Office with any projection of near-future high volume travel events, i.e., conferences, seminars, training, etc., that will result in the submission of travel claims during December 15 through January 11, 2002.

Mailing of Travel Vouchers

The sensitivity involving mailings through the US Postal Service dictates the use of a proper, legible to and from address on all correspondence. Failure to provide both could delay the mail.

FAX and E-Mail Submissions

Many of our customers are resorting to FAX and Email as their primary method for claim deliveries. When selecting FAX, insure proper placement and paper colors of documents to avoid blank or blackened-out page transmissions. When selecting email, scan the documents and save them as a .tif file. Review the scanned documents for clarity before transmitting.

Rental Vehicles

Use of Contracting Travel Office (CTO) is mandatory. Non use requires non-availability statement or approval by Authorizing Official (AO). Without statement or approval by AO, reimbursement is limited to CTO cost.

Notice for Frequent Travelers

Frequent travelers should provide a telephone/cell number or email address where they may be reached or a point of contact (POC) for inquiries concerning their travel voucher, minimizing the need to delay and/or return their claim.

Army Knowledge On-line (AKO)

Army military & civilian personnel who have an AKO email account now receive electronic notification via AKO. Please ensure your AKO account is activated.

EFT Update

All military members should receive their travel payments via EFT. If you wish to have your travel payments sent to a separate account, send an updated SF 1199 to your servicing Travel Office. If you do not notify your travel office to establish a different account, your Travel pay will be sent to your current Military Pay EFT account.

Bank of America

Government Cards

Effective 1 May 2001, the travel office may reimburse the bank fee for expedited delivery of a Government Travel Charge Card. The reimbursement must be approved/authorized by the authorizing/order-issuing official.

Customer Service Numbers

After submitting your claim and allowing a reasonable amount of elapsed time (5-7 workdays) for payment, and it is necessary for you to talk with our customer service representatives, they can be reached at:

Travel Pay Site

Telephone Number

DFAS Columbus	800-756-4571
DFAS Indianapolis	888-332-7366
DFAS Lawton-Fort Sill	800-891-1292
DFAS Orlando	800-950-9784
DFAS Rock Island	888-332-7742
DFAS Rome	800-447-1150
DFAS San Antonio	210-527-8547*
DFAS St Louis	877-303-4337
Def Agcy Tvl Div	877-952-9392

* In progress of having toll free number established

Claims Processed OCONUS

Travel voucher status for Army customers in Europe and Japan may be accessed at our **Travel Voucher Pay Information** web-site located at <https://portal.ssg.gunter.af.mil/tpq2/>