DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ARMY RESERVE
2400 ARMY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON DC 20310-2400

28 JUL '16

Safety Awareness/Suicide Prevention

Team:

1. In the past three weeks since I've taken command of USARC and assumed duties as the Chief of Army Reserve, we have lost 13 Soldiers to apparent suicides, motor vehicle crashes, drownings, or to other accidents resulting from failing to understand how or why to mitigate risks. For the most part, the Soldiers we lost were not new to our Army; they were experienced leaders. We can do better: much better. A huge part of getting after the problem is to own it. Classroom instruction, safety briefings and understanding risk assessment techniques and processes are all good foundational tools, but Leadership is the key. Engage your Soldiers. Ensure they are constantly updated on the facts surrounding the needless loss of life caused by driving too fast or when tired or while texting, having had too much to drink, swimming too far, or boating without proper equipment or during poor weather conditions. Safety is cultural. Learn to recognize and mitigate the minor risks and incorporate that into muscle memory. Getting at this problem is about paying attention to detail. It saves lives in both combat and at home. Get smart. Know what you are talking about, and engage. Never walk past a mistake or an opportunity to teach.

2. Eliminating, or even significantly reducing, Soldier suicides is an even more complex and challenging component of our responsibility as leaders. For many of our Soldiers, spread across the Nation and half way around the world, their connection with America's Army Reserve is their critical link to the bedrock of who they are, what they believe, and the lens through which they view and assess the rest of American culture. We joined the Army to be Soldiers; that simple truth is what drives many of us to regard that role as the most compelling professional responsibility of our lives. Never forget that fact, or the power of it.

3. There are few things in life that are more uplifting and more able to help us keep the long view and sense of perspective than a deep sense of purpose, combined with the three dimensions of fitness: Intellectual, Spiritual and Physical. Serving the people of the United States by being ready to win America's wars is that purpose. It is what Soldiers are called to do, and is precisely what we are going to do. Each member of this team owns a key piece of that mission and each one of you leaders are responsible for ensuring that they know it. Engage. In my assessment, there is nothing we can do as leaders that is more likely to reduce or eliminate suicide risks than to know our Soldiers and to infuse in them a sense of Belonging, Purpose and Mutual Support that will stick with them even when they are back on their "day jobs" and physically away from the Army Team. Get smart on the telltale signs of depression. Find ways to embrace your part of the team with infectious energy between Battle Assemblies. Keep an eye on each other as part of your monthly battle rhythm. Stay snapped-in. Take ownership of your piece of this awesome team, move out and lead!

CHARLES D. LUCKEY
Lieutenant General, US Army
Chief of the Army Reserve/CG,
US Army Reserve Command