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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Civilian employees: safe and secure

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Civilian employees play a vital role in supporting leaders and Soldiers at installations and agencies across the Army, and the first week of National Safety Month is dedicated to preserving the health and wellness of these critical team members, both on and off the job.

As the sponsor of National Safety Month, the National Safety Council has outlined four key areas of Civilian injury prevention — employee wellness, ergonomics, fall protection and safe driving — that leaders in both the public and private sectors can address as part of their safety efforts.

According to the NSC, individuals who are overweight or obese are at greater risk for developing heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers, among other ailments. Many employers in United States, including the Army, offer worker wellness programs that emphasize the benefits of exercise, good nutrition, stress reduction and quitting tobacco.

By creating healthier employees, these programs produce obvious benefits for the sponsoring organizations' bottom line through increased morale and productivity, reductions in absenteeism, and decreases in on-the-job injuries and costs related to healthcare and workers' compensation. More information on the Army Employee Wellness Program can be found in Army Regulation 600-63, Army Health Promotion.

Due to a lack of visibility, the topic of ergonomics is probably not at the top of many commanders' priority lists. The NSC, however, classifies ergonomic injury as one of the most important safety and health issues facing organizations today. Loss of gripping strength, pain, swelling, numbness and tingling in the extremities are all indicative of ergonomic strain, but fixing the problem is as simple as fitting the job to the individual.

In offices, properly placed computer keyboards and monitors on desks and ergonomically designed chairs help prevent most repetitive motion injuries, eyestrain and back discomfort. In industrial or tactical settings, vibration-dampening hand tools help relieve the stresses associated with equipment repair and carpentry, and the use of hand trucks, dollies and wheelbarrows is advised for moving heavy objects.

Falls are another source of concern in workplace safety. Slippery floors, messy or cluttered workspaces, improperly used ladders and work platforms, and loose rugs, mats and stair treads

have all resulted in countless injuries and emergency room visits. These hazards are just as dangerous at home, so supervisors and employees alike should ensure both their professional and personal spaces are dry and free of clutter, while also adhering to the basic principles of safe ladder use. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's "Portable Ladder Safety Tips" card can be found via the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center's website at <https://safety.army.mil/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Qmg32iP7yfU=&tabid=556>.

Privately owned vehicle and motorcycle accidents are not only the No. 1 killer of Soldiers, but also the leading cause of work-related deaths in the United States, per the NSC. Distracted driving, nonuse of seat belts, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and aggressive driving are cited by the NSC as the top four factors most commonly associated with on-the-job driving fatalities.

Like most other safety issues, driving accidents are easily preventable when employees follow the standard every time they slip behind the wheel. Drivers can stay safe by keeping their focus on the road, not their phone or radio, for the duration of their trip; always buckling up, which studies have shown to reduce the risk of death in a crash by as much as 45 percent; calling a designated driver, friend, Family member or taxi after drinking; and planning ahead and keeping calm when dealing with traffic.

Civilian employees are a source of continuity and stability in our ever-changing Army, and leaders at all levels should ensure every member of their formations has the tools to stay healthy and productive. For more information on employee safety, visit the Workplace Safety and Civilian's Corner pages on the USACR/Safety Center website, <https://safety.army.mil>.

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