



There are three topics to discuss this month: social media, the Army Family Action Plan (AFAP), and summer safety.

First, cellular technology and the explosion of Web 2.0 have developed much faster than anyone could have imagined. Facebook and other social media sites have mushroomed into huge social phenomena. Interestingly, social media sites cross all demographic groups and are used to communicate and/or collaborate. Army Family support groups are using social media sites to stay in touch with loved ones while Soldiers are deployed.

USASMDC/ARSTRAT is also taking advantage of the social media tools with accounts on Facebook (www.facebook.com/armysmdc) Twitter (www.twitter.com/armysmdc), Flickr (www.flickr.com/armysmdc) and YouTube (www.youtube.com/armysmdc). Each of these collaborative tools helps improve communication internally and externally. However, operating in cyber space is as much a danger as it is a boon and must be used with caution whether at home or at work.

"Our networks are under threat every hour of every day. They are probed thousands of times a day. They are scanned millions of times a day," stated Deputy Secretary of Defense William J. Lynn III earlier this year.

In order to protect our networks while also taking advantage of Web 2.0, USASMDC/ARSTRAT developed a new policy for the use of social media at work that must be followed. Please read it and help protect our networks; each of you are the first line of defense against cyber attacks.

Now let me turn to the Army Family Action Plan (AFAP). Last month the SMD C/ARSTRAT AFAP met in Colorado Springs to discuss issues affecting Soldiers, Civilians, and Families. We had delegates, facilitators and support persons who traveled from Germany, Japan, Alaska, Huntsville, and Colorado Springs to discuss issues of importance to our command. AFAP is an extremely important program that provides a conduit to communicate issues of importance to our senior leaders.

Last year the Army worked 633 issues submitted by AFAP delegates. AFAP issues have resulted in legislative changes, policy changes, and improved programs. There have been several successful executive and legislative initiatives that addressed AFAP issues including:

- Public Law 110-314 authorized the Higher Education Opportunity Act mandating that states charge no higher than in-state tuition rates for military personnel and their dependents (AFAP Issue 521)
- Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 authorizing distribution of Montgomery GI Bill benefits (MGIB) to dependents (AFAP Issue 497) and MGIB for Veterans Education Assistance Program Era Soldiers (AFAP Issue 385)
- Executive Order (spouse employment) allowing noncompetitive appointment authority for spouses of active duty (AD), disabled service members (SM) and un-remarried widow/widower of a SM killed on AD (AFAP Issue 591) These are great examples of the power of the AFAP process and the difference each of us can make by getting involved.

Lastly, let's discuss summer safety. While summer may be a month away, the weather in many parts of the country is drawing people to the lakes, the woods, and the backyard. I know those at Redstone Arsenal have already started grilling while our teammates in Colorado Springs may still be shoveling snow. However, all of us will soon be enjoying warm days and nights.

With the advent of warmer weather come the inherent dangers associated with boating, swimming, and riding ATVs – just to name a few. Take it easy the first time out, especially if it's been a long winter where you are located. If you are operating a boat or an ATV for the first time, get the proper training and use the right equipment. If you ride a motorcycle, make sure you take the mandatory riding class tailored specifically for the type of motorcycle you ride and wear all the required personal protective equipment.

Any activity can become dangerous if alcohol is introduced into the mixture especially if you are boating, swimming, or driving. Do not operate any type of water craft or motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol. Prior to taking to the water, ensure you have your water craft inspected for proper operation and always wear a serviceable and approved life preserver while on the water. Don't discount safety from even benign activities such as grilling out, because even simple activities can turn ugly if we let our guard down. As always, whenever in a vehicle wear a seatbelt and watch out for motorcycles.

Bottom line this summer: have fun, be safe, be smart, and be aware of your capabilities.