



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

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MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP (SEE DISTRIBUTION)  
CHIEFS OF THE MILITARY SERVICES  
COMMANDANT OF THE COAST GUARD  
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS  
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Winter Holiday Season Safety

The winter holidays are a joyous season when families and friends gather to honor traditions, take a break from daily routines, and renew the hope and spirit that is reminiscent of this special time of year. The holidays can also be a challenging time for many of us, especially as we navigate the demands of work and personal life during a global pandemic. Historically, the Department suffers an increased number of off-duty preventable fatalities between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. Last year was no exception, with 12 Service members lost, primarily due to private motor vehicle incidents.

I ask that each and every member of the Department exercise sound judgment and include proper risk management techniques in your winter and holiday plans, both on- and off-duty. Please pay close attention to weather conditions, remain vigilant, maintain proper awareness of your surroundings while traveling, and continue following DoD Force Health Protection and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention coronavirus disease 2019 guidance both at home and in the workplace.

The holiday season may also present unique stresses that require us to be mindful of ourselves and each other. If you, a colleague, or a loved one needs assistance, particularly with managing the stresses of the season, Service members can call the Military Crisis Line for 24/7, confidential assistance, at (800) 273-8255, or there is confidential help available through your local Civilian Employee Assistance Program.

I encourage all of you to enjoy the holiday season and to take the opportunity to reconnect, relax, and recharge for the upcoming New Year. I offer my sincere personal gratitude for the outstanding accomplishments we have achieved this past year. It is a great privilege and honor to serve with you each day as we continue the critical work of defending our Nation. I wish all of you the very best for an enjoyable and safe holiday season.

*Mark T. Esper*



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