Up-to date emergency data vital for family readiness

By MC1 (AW) LaTunya Howard, Navy Personnel Command Public Affairs

MILLINGTON, Tenn. – Off-duty accidents and illnesses were among the leading causes of death for Sailors in calendar year 2011, said a Navy official March 9.

"As service members, we usually remember to update our emergency data prior to a deployment or individual augmentee assignment," said Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Dana Swope, leading petty officer and licensed mortician, Navy and Marine Corps Mortuary Affairs. "Non-combat related incidents such as car accidents, happen daily so we should get in the practice of verifying our records at a minimum of twice a year."

Sailors must keep their Record of Emergency Data (DD form 93) and Dependency Application Record of Emergency Data (NAVPERS 1070/602 also known as your Page 2) updated with their primary and secondary next-of-kin upon marriage, divorce, the birth of a child or any other significant life changing event.

During a Page 2 update, Sailors should identify a person authorized to direct disposition (PADD) of the deceased.

"The PADD is the individual the Sailor appoints to oversee arrangements after their death and whom we will take our direction from in fulfilling the Sailor's final wishes," said Swope.

According to Swope, the Page 2 and Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) forms are among the first documents the Navy will turn to in the event a Sailor is very seriously injured or dies.

"Unfortunately, we sometimes find out when we need to notify family members of injury or the death of a service member, that the information [in the Page 2 and SGLI] is outdated or incomplete which hampers the notification process," said Swope. "Not maintaining up-to-date Page 2 information could delay notification to next-of-kin and the distribution of death benefits."

Also, during a Page 2 update, Sailors should identify three people that they would desire to be bedside should they be injured and incapacitated. The Navy has a Bedside program that allows up to three family members to be present at an injured service member's bedside should the injury be sufficient enough to warrant it.

While illness and death are not the most popular topics to discuss, Swope suggests Sailors address the subject with their loved ones.

"Sailors can take a great deal of stress off their family by making sure someone knows their final wishes," said Swope. "When a Sailor or Marine dies, a uniformed casualty assistance calls officer (CACO) is assigned to contact their family. CACO notifies the family of the death of their service member and they assist the family through the entire process."

The CACO is assigned by a regional office under Commander, Naval Installations Command.

A Sailor's designated beneficiary may receive multiple death benefits, i.e. death gratuity, SGLI, unpaid pay and allowances and possible survivor benefit entitlements of the service member.

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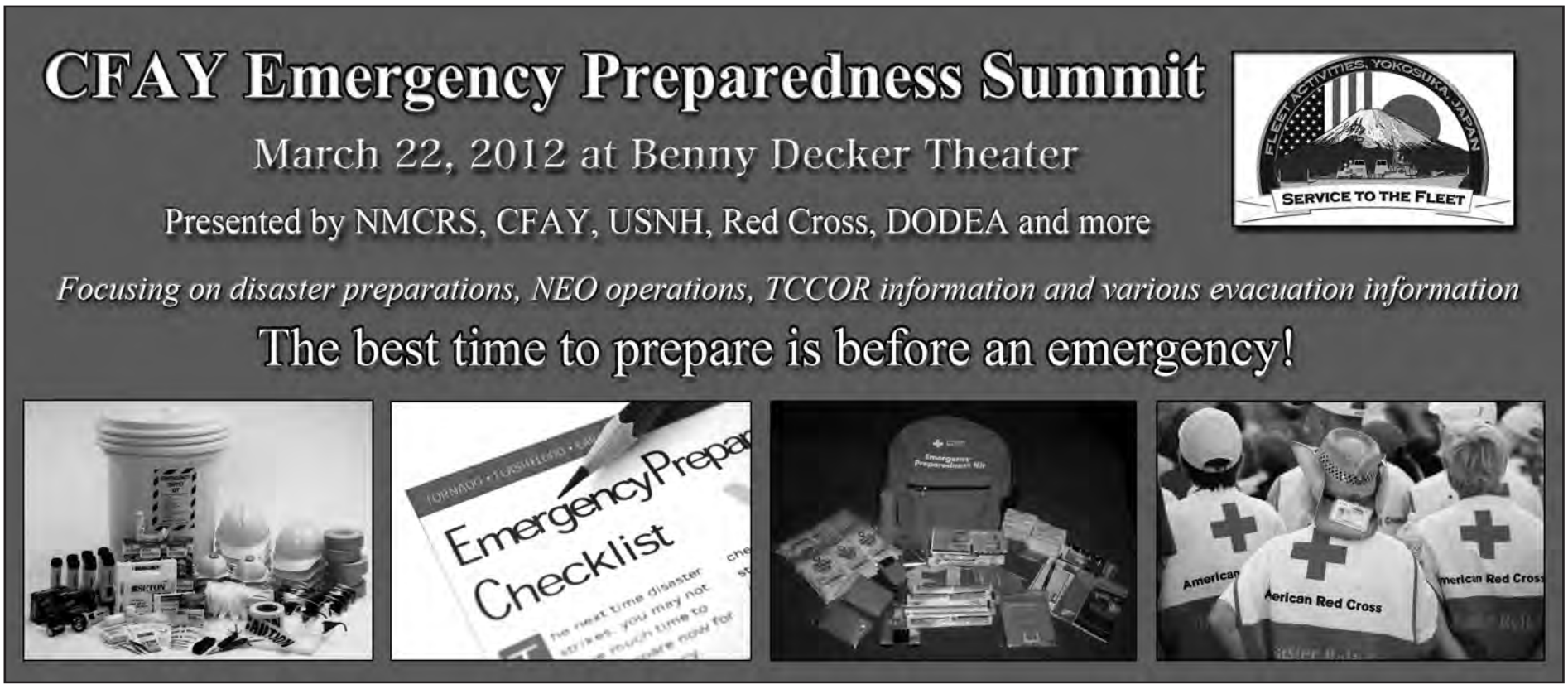
Death gratuity is a benefit paid to beneficiarys designated by the Sailor at no cost to the Sailor. The total amount payable is $100,000, and Sailors may designate up to 10 people to receive it. The amount paid to a beneficiary is specified on the Sailor's Page 2.

SGLI is a life insurance benefit that Sailors elect to purchase through payroll deduction. The coverage is available in $50,000 increments up to $400,000. The designated beneficiarys are identified on the Sailor's SGLV 8286, SGLI Election and Certificate. Sailors should access their electronic service record in Navy Standard Integrated Personnel System and their Official Military Personnel Files to verify Page 2 data information regularly.

"We have seen firsthand how out-dated emergency data can delay notification of next-of-kin and even result in benefits being distributed to former spouses," said Swope. "I encourage Sailors to review their records and keep them up-to-date."

Contact the Personnel Support Detachment or personnel office if changes to beneficiary data are needed.

Maintaining personnel and service records is a key element of readiness, one of the five areas of the 21st Century Sailor and Marine initiative which consolidates a set of objectives and policies, new and existing, to maximize Sailor and Marine personal readiness, build resiliency and hone the most combat-effective force in the history of the Department of the Navy.

For more information on death benefits, Sailors should contact the Navy Casualty Assistance office at 1-800-368-3202/901-874-2501/DSN 882-2501 or call the Navy Personnel Command (NPC) customer service center (CSC) at 1-866-827-5672, email CSCMailbox@navy.mil or visit NPC's website at www.npc.navy.mil.