'101 Critical Days of Summer' Program gears toward safety

By Greg Mitchell, CFAY Public Affairs

U.S. Air Force illustration by A1C Douglas Ellis

Summer is here and for service members and their families, having a plan for the upcoming months will be a key component of staying safe during these hot months, and Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY)'s '101 Critical Days of Summer' Program starts them in the right direction.

"The ultimate goal for the 101 Critical Days of Summer Program is to raise awareness or set reminders to our Sailors, Marines and family members about safety during summertime," said Recreational Off-Duty Safety Program Manager Maria Amansec. "Such hazards are brought by more people on the roadway, children out of school, more family time to travel and enjoy the beach, barbeque and be exposed to heat stress."

'101 Critical Days of Summer' Program, which officially started May 28, Memorial Day weekend, and ends Sept. 4, Labor Day weekend, originated on board CFAY six years ago and continues to function to this day.

"Our monthly National Safety Council (NSC) Safety Training and a copy of 'summer preparation' is sent out to safety petty officers for their departmental training," said Amensac. "What we hope happens is that the training is not only conducted within the workspace, but also it follows the individual home where it is shared with family members and is exercised there effectively."

Amongst Amansec's many duties are inspections of recreational equipment and activities in Yokosuka, Ikego and Negishi housing areas; including the gyms, baseball fields, tennis courts, bowling alleys and swimming pools.

Due to the events of March 11, 2011, Japan is expected to face electricity shortages, and people across the nation are being urged to conserve energy during the summer. That means less air conditioning use in public places as well as at home.

As the temperatures climb, some are affected more than others due to the climate change.

"I think people should be aware of the fact that our seniors and young people are the ones most vulnerable to the heat," said Amansec. "This becomes more important due to the conditions in Japan which require us to conserve as much energy as possible by not using air conditioners and lights so much. This may add to the potential hazards of heat stress."

According to U.S. Navy statistics, during the course of last years' '101 Critical Days of Summer', 16 Sailors and 15 Marines lost their lives due to non-combat fatalities; 13 by motorcycle crash, 11 by car and truck, three by recreational activities, three by drowning and one by way of accidental use of an all-terrain vehicle (ATV).

"I feel that all service members and their families should take the 101 days of summer timeframe very seriously," said Amansec. "In some instances, it very well could be the difference between life or even death."

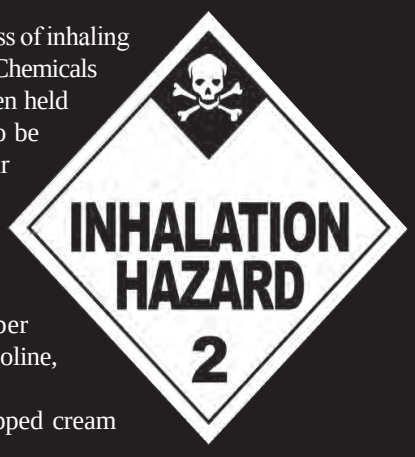
According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, heat stress can result in heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, or heat rashes.

"The best way to combat heat stress is for people to hydrate themselves; you need to be able to replace the water that you lose from perspiration to avoid heat related injuries," said Amansec. "It is extremely important to wear loose, light clothing, hats, sunglasses and sun protection such as sunscreen when outdoors, even when doing something as simple as gardening and washing a car."

She also recommends that when traveling, swimming, or out on a public outing such as a barbeque with friends, stay partnered up with someone so you can check each other's temperature or have someone to help you out in case of an emergency.

"It is definitely better to be safe than sorry," said Amansec. "We are not trying to say that people should stay home," said Amansec. "We just want people to be aware of the potential hazards due to the expected rising temperatures."

Dangers of Huffing:
Signs of inhaulant abuse



Huffing is a term used to describe the process of inhaling chemical vapors through the mouth or nose. Chemicals are poured onto a rag or into a bag and then held over the face to be inhaled. They can also be inhaled directly by sniffing vapors from their containers or by spraying directly into the mouth or nose.

There are four basic types of chemicals that are used as inhalants.
Volatile solvents - toluene (glues, rubber cement, paint thinners, paint removers), gasoline, correction fluids.

Gases - Nitrous oxide (found in whipped cream canisters), chloroform, propane.

Aerosols (sprays) - toluene (spray paint), butane (lighters, air fresheners, deodorants, hair sprays).

Nitrites (also known as poppers and snappers) - This type of inhalant is primarily used as a sexual enhancer as it has slightly different effects than the above mentioned substances, usually sold as "liquid incense" or "room odorizer".

Most of these substances occur in the hundreds of everyday products we have lying around our houses. What makes them so dangerous is that they are so readily available and cheap. For this reason, many people are not aware of the dangers that exist.

If you suspect that someone might be involved in this form of drug abuse, here are some signs you may want to look out for. Some of these signs are apparent directly after using an inhalant; others show up down the road: drunken appearance, weight loss or lack of appetite, glassy eyes, odor or chemical smells on clothing and breath, pale skin, slurred speech, rashes and sores around mouth and nose, restlessness, nervousness, mood swings and missing or empty chemical containers left around or in garbage.

For more information please contact your command's Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Program (SARP) counselor.