CFAY designated driver program ramps up for summer

Story and photo by Joe Schmitt, CFAY Public Affairs

The Naval Safety Center website says that incidents involving drivers who have alcohol in their system, commonly know as Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol (DUI) or Driving While Drinking Indicated (DWDI), increase during the summer. Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka has a designated program that steps up during these times to ensure everyone has an opportunity to make it home safe.

The issue is so important it has been mentioned in every update CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. David Owen has given on the command information television channel, Facebook, and Youtube sites.

"...good shipmates don't let shipmates drink and drive...," said Owen.

Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta addressed the issue in a written statement on safe driving sent out to commands. "...We also know that alcohol, even in small quantities, impairs our decision making and is a significant factor in all accident categories. So before taking your first sip, think ahead and have a sensible plan; work together and remember never to drink and drive; remember to always be safe..."

Locally, the program is supported by CFAY's Drug And Alcohol Program Advisors (DAPA) program, Morale Welfare and Recreation (MWR), and Navy Exchange (NEX), through information, awareness and efforts like the free non-alcoholic drinks for designated drivers and taxi vouchers for a taxi ride home.

"We understand that the weather is nicer and people want to go out and have their barbecues and they start driving more. I'm not going to tell people not to drink. I am telling them to have a plan, drink responsibly and not to drink and drive," said Chief Fire Controlman Kristina Remick, CFAY DAPA. "There is no excuse for it especially here in Japan with all the trains, buses and taxis. On base we have the taxi voucher program, the designated driver program, and plenty of other ways to get where you want to go."

The designated driver program is supported by all the clubs that serve alcohol on base.

"All you need to do is approach the bartender and tell them you are the designated driver and then you'll get all your non-alcoholic drinks free for the night," said Fred Garcia, CPO Club General Manager. "All the bartenders have had training and they know the programs. We want everyone to have a good time and all make it home safely."

The initiative to reduce the number of incidents even has support from community members that want to help out.

"The base is not the big and people get to each other. I've seen people who didn't arrive together meet here and make a plan for one of them to be the designated driver," said Garcia. "We have a great community here. People do help others. There is always a responsible choice to make."

Patrons enjoy themselves at the bar inside the Commander Fleet Activities Chief Petty Officers Club. All clubs on base that serve alcohol support the designated driver program. CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. David Owen regularly says "... good shipmates don't let shipmates drink and drive..." and emphasizes having a plan and acting responsibly whenever people drink alcohol.

'Hit the road, Jack…' But pay attention while out there

Compiled from NavyLive.DoD.mil and CFAY Safety

Yes, we've all seen them… distracted drivers are everywhere and being on the road with "them" is frustrating. Luckily, you're not one of those irritating drivers that even considers doing something other than focusing on the road… right? That's why you should send this to your "friend" who might be one of those people as a reminder that we want you to be safe out there. Derek Nelson brings us another post worth taking a look at from his Museum of Mishaps; read, take heed and share with those you care about.

Distracted driving is a dangerous epidemic on America's roadways. In 2009 alone, nearly 5,500 people were killed and 450,000 more were injured in distracted driving crashes.

According to car ads, the point of driving is adrenalin and fun, but that's just the dream world of advertising. The real point is to get where you're going, not wreck your car and not make your insurance rates any worse.

The key is defensive driving, and the reason it is so necessary is that there are so many inattentive drivers out there that you 0share the road with. You see them putting on make-up, yakking on cell phones, switching lanes without looking, cutting you off at a merge, and doing about two dozen other things that are not only dangerous but obnoxious.

Consider:

• Even if you're a great driver (with all due respect, the odds are against it), you can't control (or even predict) the actions of the other drivers.

• In the past decade, 535 Sailors have died in wrecks, compared to 197 who were killed in on-duty mishaps. Where do you think you are safer?

• An analysis of 300 wrecks showed that 60% involved "skill-based errors." In other words, six times out of ten, the driver lacked the driving skills to keep four wheels on the pavement and keep from smashing into other cars.

• No matter how good you are (or think you are), distraction, fatigue, a few drinks and too much speed are going to make you worse.

Distracted driving is such a growing issue that the Department of Transportation has created a website on it at www.distraction.gov, which is where you will find personal stories that bring a new sense of urgency to the topic. If you take nothing else from this post, take this as a request from us to think before you reach for a phone call (or anything else) while driving. You may not be injured if you get into an accident, but is that the worst outcome you can envision?

Distracted driving is any activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving. All distractions endanger driver, passenger, and bystander safety.

These types of distractions include:

• Texting.
• Using a cell phone or smartphone.
• Eating and drinking.
• Talking to passengers.
• Grooming.
• Reading, including maps.
• Using a navigation system.
• Watching a video.
• Adjusting a radio, CD player, or MP3 player.

But, because text messaging requires visual, manual, and cognitive attention from the driver, it is by far the most alarming distraction.

The best way to end distracted driving is to educate everyone about the danger it poses. If you don't already think distracted driving is a safety problem, please take a moment to learn more. And, as with everything on Distraction.gov, please share these facts with others. Together, we can help save lives.