SAFETY ZONE SAFETY ZONE

Rhumb Lines: Summer safety, Labor Day weekend update

By Commander
Naval Safety Center

"Labor Day weekend is on the horizon, and it's time to enjoy one last blast of summer. Whether you spend the long weekend at the beach, in the mountains, or just relaxing with family and friends, remember to practice solid risk management. Our Navy and nation will need everyone back at work Tuesday morning." – Rear Adm. Arthur J. Johnson, commander, Naval Safety Center

Labor Day Safety Statistics

• Last Labor Day weekend, there were 42 mishaps in the Navy. Most were relatively minor, but two proved fatal. One third class petty officer was killed when his car struck a tree, and another young Sailor died in his barracks room after a night of drinking.

• Since 2005, a total of six Sailors have died during the Labor Day weekend holidays. Many more have been injured.

• Current statistics show that Sailors have been practicing risk management, and the end of summer holiday is not statistically more dangerous than other weekends.

• The exception to this has been motorcycles. Based on an average of the last five years, nearly twice as many Sailors are killed on motorcycles during the Labor Day weekend than on a typical weekend. However, there were no motorcycle fatalities last Labor Day weekend, moving the trend in the right direction.

Labor Day Weekend Safety Tips

• Summer might be ending, but attempting to cram too many activities or too many risk factors into one weekend can lead to problems.

• If on or near the water, make sure you know how to swim. Keep a close eye on children; it only takes a few minutes, and as little as an inch of water, for a child to drown.

• Alcohol diminishes your vision, depth perception and coordination. Avoid alcohol when participating in water sports, athletics, or driving a vehicle. Drink alcohol in moderation.

• When riding a motorcycle, make sure to wear all the gear, all the time. Proper personal protective equipment is a requirement year round, on or off base.

• If traveling out of the area by car, fill out a Travel Risk Planning System (TRiPS) report. TRiPS can be accessed at www.nko.navy.mil. The online assessment will help identify possible risk factors when traveling, as well as determine ways to mitigate those risks. Be sure to check car tire pressure and fluid levels prior to a long trip.

• Labor Day barbeques are popular. Make sure grills are in good working order, well-ventilated and away from homes and other structures.

• Summer sports cause numerous minor injuries every year. Last Labor Day weekend, 12 Sailors were injured participating in sporting activities. Be careful while enjoying recreational sports.

Key Messages

• Enjoy the last few weeks of summer, but remember off-duty risk management.

• Managing risk means considering what might go wrong and planning in advance to manage contingencies.

• While we're seeing success in summer risk management, the loss of even one trained and ready Sailor is unacceptable.

Facts and Figures

• As of Aug. 6, 2010, eight Sailors have died this summer during off-duty hours: four in four-wheel motor vehicle mishaps, two on motorcycles, and two during recreation mishaps.

• In 2009, 16 Sailors died during the summer.

• Approximately half of last year's reportable Labor Day weekend mishaps occurred during organized sporting events and other recreation activities.

MCPON West's Labor Day safety message

Special from Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) Rick D. West

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON)(SS/SW) Rick D. West released the following Labor Day message to the fleet Aug. 27.

"Shipmates and Navy families, as we enjoy the last few weeks of summer, I would like to take this opportunity to remind our Sailors and their families to keep safety in mind especially during what is considered to be the unofficial last weekend of summer, Labor Day weekend.

"We all need to think about off-duty risk management while planning our Labor Day weekend activities, and not try to cram in too many activities into one weekend which could lead to injury or fatality.

"While we have seen success in summer risk management, the loss of even one trained and ready Sailor is unacceptable, and last Labor Day weekend we lost two. As of Aug. 6, eight Sailors have died this summer during off-duty hours: four in four-wheel motor vehicle mishaps, two on motorcycles and two during recreation mishaps. Based on an average of the last five years, nearly twice as many Sailors are killed on motorcycles during Labor Day weekend than any other weekend. Remember, proper personal protective equipment is a requirement year round, on or off base. Keep in mind that if you are going to play, play it safe.

"Summer sports cause numerous minor injuries every year and 12 Sailors were injured participating in sporting activities last year.

"I issued a challenge to the fleet during Fourth of July weekend and that was to keep up the success rate of zero fatalities from Memorial Day, and I'm giving you the same challenge for this Labor Day weekend.

"Use caution when driving, participating in water activities, and if drinking, have a plan. Stay safe and enjoy your much-deserved time off with your family and friends, and as always, keep in mind our Sailors who are deployed and can't be with their loved ones.

"Enjoy your Labor Day weekend and HOOYAH!"

MCPON(SS/SW) Rick D. West
U.S. Navy photo by
MC1 Jennifer A. Villalovos

The MCPON is the senior enlisted person in the Navy. The MCPON serves as the senior enlisted leader of the Navy, and as an advisor to the Chief of Naval Operations and to the Chief of Naval Personnel in matters dealing with enlisted personnel and their families.

The MCPON is also an advisor to the many boards dealing with enlisted personnel issues; is the enlisted representative of the Department of the Navy at special events; may be called upon to testify on enlisted personnel issues before Congress; and, maintains a liaison with enlisted spouse organizations.

For more news, information and Podcasts from the MCPON, visit the website www.navy.mil/mcpon/index.asp.

Summer safety tips for grilling

By Naval Safety Center
Public Affairs

Each year about 30 people are injured as a result of gas-grill fires and explosions. Many of these mishaps occur when someone first uses a grill that has been left idle for a period of time or just after refilling and reattaching the grill's gas container.

Each year about 30 people die and more than 100 are injured as a result of carbon monoxide fumes from charcoal grills and hibachis used inside. During the 2003 to 2006 timeframe, U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 7,900 home fires involving grills, hibachis or barbecues per year.

In an average of 2,900 of these fires, a structure caught fire. In an average of 5,000 fires, something else burned. These 7,900 fires caused an average of 120 reported injuries and $80 million in property damage.

Although gas grills are used roughly 1.5 times as often as charcoal grills, they were involved in five times as many fires. Gas grills were involved in 6,400 home fires, including 2,100 structure fires and 4,300 outdoor fires.

When using a gas or charcoal grill, follow these "do's and don't" tips:

• Keep your grill at least three feet away from your house, porch, shed, trees or bushes.

• Use starter fluid that is made especially for barbecue grills. Follow the instructions about how to apply and light it.

• Don't squirt starter fluid on a fire after you've already tried to start it.

• Never use gasoline to try to start or restart charcoal. Gasoline is incredibly explosive and dangerous.

• If you have a gas grill, make sure you read and follow the instructions about how to use and store it.

• Make sure the valves work and that you are completely familiar with how to use them and with their purpose. Make sure they are off when you aren't using the grill.

• Store gas cylinders outside and keep them away from buildings.

• If your grill needs repairs, take it to an authorized dealer or repair shop.

• Keep children away from the grill both while you are cooking, and after you finish while the grill is still hot and when hot coals remain.

• Don't leave lit grills unattended.