

Motor vehicle safety top priority for NAVSAFECEN

By April Phillips, Naval Safety Center Public Affairs

NORFOLK, Va. -- The Naval Safety Center (NAVSAFECEN) offers resources to help manage driving risks.

Fiscal year 2011 was the safest on record in terms of four-wheel motor vehicle fatalities. Car and truck operators did a great job of managing the risks of driving. However, mid-way through the second quarter of FY2012, fatalities are in danger of creeping back up.

As of Feb. 1, four Sailors have lost their lives in four-wheel personal motor vehicle (PMV) fatalities, compared to one at the same time in 2011. Motorcycle fatality rates are static, with three so far this fiscal year - the same as last year at this time.

NAVSAFECEN's Command Master Chief Dominick Torchia recently released a "Safety Broadcast," a one-page fact sheet outlining timely information about various trending topics. His most recent covers PMV statistics, risk factors and resources for improvement.

"While we made big strides in reducing the number of four-wheel motor vehicle fatalities last year, this is no time to declare victory," said Torchia. "Be aware of the biggest risk factors - speed, alcohol, fatigue, ejection and distractions - and do everything you can to manage those risks."

Those risk factors - speed, alcohol, fatigue and ejections (lack of seat belts) and distractions (SAFE-D) - account for the vast majority of motor vehicle mishaps in the Navy and nationwide. Motorcycle fatalities are also a continuing concern, with their own set of risk factors. However, the biggest risk factor Sailors face is completely within their control - training.

"The biggest challenge we face is closing the last tactical mile with regard to advanced motorcycle training," said Torchia. "Every sportbike rider is required to take the Military Sportbike Rider Course (MSRC), but right now there are about 2,000 sportbike riders who have not completed it. This training has proven value. Nine out of 12 sportbike riders who died in FY11 had not attended the course."

Torchia said the MSRC is provided at no cost to Sailors and is designed to be completed during the workday. No leave is required to attend the course. It covers both the different physical handling characteristics and the required mental attitudes for safe operation of these high-performance machines.

The MSRC was created after a spike in motorcycle fatalities in 2008, when 33 Sailors lost their lives while riding. After an initial training push, the number fell to 13 in FY2010, but crept up slightly to 16 in FY11. Eliminating all preventable PMV fatalities remains a top priority for NAVSAFECEN.

For more information about motor vehicle safety and motorcycle courses, visit www.public.navy.mil/navsafecen/Pages/ashore/motor_vehicle/motorvehicle.aspx.