
SAPTA Bulletin

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A SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION TEAM ATLANTIC (SAPTA) PUBLICATION

National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month

December is the National Drunk and Drugged Driving Awareness

Month.

Driving involves multiple tasks, the demands of which can change continually. To drive safely, one must maintain alertness, make decisions based on ever-changing information present in the environment, and execute maneuvers based on these decisions. Drinking alcohol impairs a wide range of skills necessary for carrying out these tasks. This article examines alcohol impairment of driving skills and describes some factors that increase motor vehicle crash risk.

The proportion of alcohol to blood in the body is expressed as the blood alcohol concentration (BAC). BAC is expressed as the percentage of alcohol in deciliters of blood--for example, 0.10 percent



(i.e., 0.10 grams per deciliter. A deciliter is $1/10^{\text{th}}$ of a liter). A 160-pound man will have a BAC of approximately 0.04 percent 1 hour after consuming two 12-ounce beers or two other standard drinks on an empty stomach. A woman may reach .045.

Youthful age has been cited as one of the most important variables related to crash risk. Young drivers are not only inexperienced in driving and drinking, but also in the

combination of these two activities. In 1998, almost 7,800 persons age 16 through 20 were drivers in fatal motor vehicle crashes. Twenty-three percent of these drivers, for whom drinking any quantity of alcohol is illegal, had BAC's of 0.01 percent or higher, compared with 26 percent of drivers age 21 and older. Progress has been made in reducing the incidence of drinking and driving yet sadly, this type of behavior continues in the Coast Guard community as well as across the nation.

What can you do to help stop drunk driving?

If you have been touched by a drunk driving incident by having a loved one killed or maimed,

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you can join one of a growing number of web rings supported by MADD or PADD (People Affected by Drunk Driving) and show your support by posting a "memorial" or offering support to those of similar circumstance.

Even if you haven't been touched by drunk driving you can help get the word out by constantly reminding your friends and crew that it is neither fashionable nor socially acceptable to drink and drive. Tell them "it is their duty" not to drink and drive.

You can talk to your family and friends about drinking and driving. Tell them you wouldn't want to see them behind bars after hurting or killing someone because they didn't call for a ride. This can sometimes make more of an impact than telling them you wouldn't want to see them hurt or killed. Many people that are drinking and driving don't seem to care about themselves but would never want to hurt someone else. As long as it is legal to drink, people will use alcohol for many reasons. Some use it every day to stem off withdrawal, others once a year on New Years Eve just for fun. No matter what the reason it is imperative that we all get involved in prevention by sharing ideas and implementing ways to get help for our friends and relatives that will need a ride.

Alternative: Hire a designated driver. Someone at your unit can probably use the extra money.



YN1 Mark A. Potts

The GEICO Award

Yeoman 1st Class Mark A. Potts, U.S. Coast Guard Training Center, Yorktown, Va., was the Coast Guard recipient of the 1999 GEICO Military Service Award for his drug and alcohol abuse prevention efforts.

Potts' current assignment is as an Addiction Prevention Specialist/Facilitator for the Maintenance and Logistics Command Atlantic. The Award reads:

"As a key member of the Coast Guard's Substance-Abuse Prevention Team Atlantic (SAPTA), he was instrumental in the development of an evening Substance Abuse Free Environment (SAFE) course for more than 1,200 young Coast Guard men and women in 1999. He also helped train 70 new Collateral Duty Addictions Representatives. Without this class, substance-abuse-prevention training for this "high-risk" population would

have to be delayed for an indeterminate amount of time. In addition to his military duties, Potts serves as a facilitator for a local [community] alcohol safety action program, providing prevention training to 50 people with drug and/or alcohol offenses. He also has volunteered at a local mission and with an outreach program that provides community substance abuse prevention seminars and mentoring services for people with financial problems as the result of substance abuse."

The GEICO Military Service Awards Program spotlights the valuable and lasting contributions enlisted members of the Armed Forces make in three specific areas of endeavor. The GEICO Philanthropic Foundation supports these awards. GEICO recognizes the six military recipients during a special annual awards ceremony held in the spring in Washington, DC. Recipients receive a plaque, a \$2,500 cash honorarium, and roundtrip transportation and lodging for them and their spouse to Washington, DC to attend the presentation ceremony. Enlisted members may receive an award for achievements or contributions in any of the following areas:

- Drug and alcohol abuse prevention
- Fire safety and fire prevention
- Traffic safety and accident prevention

Individuals are selected based on recent contributions or noteworthy accomplishments in one of the areas of endeavor while serving on active duty or in the reserves/national guard.

Contributions or accomplishments are evaluated through September 30 of each year. However, nominations may be based on activities that span several previous years, are ongoing, or were accomplished completely in the

previous year. Each unit, base, post, or activity nominates enlisted members it considers worthy, according to the established procedures of its particular service. Should YOU be nominated?

For more information please visit the GEICO website at:
<http://www.geico.com/insproducts/milservpage.html>

Cool Links

1. **Alcohol Alerts:** Print and post a new one each month! Find them here...
<http://silk.nih.gov/silk/niaaa1/publication/alalerts.htm>
2. **On-Line Diagnosis-Substance Related Disorders:** An interactive test where one can answer some questions and get an “unofficial” diagnosis online instantly. A good eye opener for the “fence sitter” and those who are simply curious about their own relationship with substances with potential for addiction.
<http://www.mentalhealth.com/fr71.html>
3. **Prevention Plans:** This is a CSAP and SAMSHA site with a “tool” that takes one step by step through considerations in prevention planning. Assess your needs and resources here:
<http://www.preventiondss.org/>
4. **Facts on Binge Drinking:**
<http://www.nasulgc.org/bingedrink/bingefacts.pdf>
5. **Another Empty Bottle:** A support site for the friends, family, and alcoholics. Lots of great links!
<http://www.alcoholismhelp.com/help/>

The SAPTA Bulletin is a quarterly electronic publication produced for Collateral Duty Addictions Representatives and their commands. Editorial content is unofficial and not authority for action. Views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Coast Guard.

Future editions may include letters to the editor. Letters to the editor allow readers to comment on alcohol and drug related issues facing the Coast Guard. Please limit remarks to 100 words or less. No names will be withheld. Provide rank, first and last names, phone number and unit. Send comments/letters to rgrigg@rtc.uscg.mil or fax to (757) 856-2077.

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Happy Holidays!