

Sailors: Drunken Driving 101

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NORFOLK - The National Save-a-Life Tour visited Naval Station Norfolk Feb. 7-8 to give Sailors a first-hand look at the effect alcohol has on the ability to safely operate a vehicle.

The Save-a-Life Tour uses three of the most high-tech multi-screen drunken driving simulators in the world to bring home the shocking reality of the life-changing and often deadly consequences of drinking and driving.

"All of a sudden someone dies and (he or she) says to themselves, 'Man, I should have listened,'" said Brian Beldyga, Save-a-Life Tour facilitator.

"No one has to be killed or seriously injured before they listen. This is why we use these special techniques."

Sailors were given a short introduction about the drunken driving simulator before getting in the driver's seat and taking it for a test drive. They were also exposed to videos featuring alcohol-related crashes and their victims.

"At first I was thinking I could beat the system," said Air Traffic Controller Airmen Ashanti Troutman.

"When you get in the simulator it seems like a normal car but then it just doesn't react like one. I thought it was very realistic."

Organizers of the Save-a-Life Tour are confident their presentation creates enough of an impact to cause people to think twice before getting behind the wheel.

"I just want Sailors to listen and take some of what they are learning with them," said Beldyga.

"So, when they are out in the world they will be more confident and stand up to their friends on the issue of driving drunk."

Damage Controlmen 1st Class (SW/AW) Troy Milton from the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise (CVN-69), brought a group of more than 50 Sailors to the simulator as part of his ship's indoctrination. Milton said he thought the training was particularly useful for first-term Sailors.

"I think this training would certainly help lower alcohol related incidents especially if we got more involvement," said Milton.

"I think introducing junior Sailors to this would be very beneficial because a lot of them get here straight out of boot camp and they are still young and think they are bullet-proof."

The Naval Safety Center and Navy commands world-wide continue to utilize programs such as the Save-a-Life Tour, Travel Risk Planning Systems and a host of others to educate service members on the dangers of all forms of impaired driving.

According to the Center for Disease Control, an alcohol-related vehicle crash kills someone every 31 minutes and injures someone every two minutes.