



Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans' Safe Driving Initiative

Safe Driving Newsletter

Do you know the leading cause of death among the age group 15 – 44 years of age? The answer: motor vehicle crashes. And this is also the age group that includes many of our new veterans. More die from motor vehicle crashes than from suicide.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among veterans in the early years after they return from deployment. This applies to those returning from Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as those who returned from deployments in previous eras.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs, James Peake has joined the Secretary of Transportation, Mary Peters in a partnership to educate veterans and the public about the prevention of motor vehicle fatalities. In addition, they will jointly work with researchers to better understand what can be done to prevent vehicle fatalities following deployments.

At the announcement of the partnership, Secretary Peake set the VA on a course to carry out several safe driving initiatives during 2009. Those initiatives include:

- the assignment of Safe Driving Coordinators at each medical center. This duty will be given to current Patient Safety Coordinators.
- training for Safe Driving Coordinators – beginning with a national call that took place on January 7th and a training conference that will be held in March.
- education of medical staff about the use of high dose, long acting sleep medications and their potential for raising the risk of automobile and motor cycle accidents
- the activation of a web site devoted to the prevention of motor vehicle crashes
- the development (supported by the Department of Transportation) and distribution of patient education materials for use in VA medical facilities.
- the requirement for each medical center to host a Safe Driving Rally during fiscal year 2009.

The Secretary emphasized that these efforts – especially the rally – should involve Veteran Service Organizations, Department of Defense personnel, and other community organizations.

The VA website for Safe Driving is: www.safedriving.va.gov.

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