

Dangerous Distractions: Avoiding Unintended Consequences

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A quick glance at the news headlines will tell you that dangerous distractions are everywhere and even a seemingly safe swim at the beach can lead to disaster without good situational awareness.

The Navy provides resources through local programs and briefings at our installations to help Sailors avoid unintended consequences of many seemingly harmless activities.

"When Sailors arrive at a new command, they generally don't know what training and resources are available, so a good thing to do upon arrival is to attend the command safety indoctrination briefing to understand installation specific safety programs and hear about local hazards," said Richard Maiello, safety director at Navy Installations Command (NIC).

The installation briefings are helpful, but still there are many incidents that can be easily avoided by ensuring all distractions are taken care of prior to heading off base. If you're driving, make sure any distractions are placed well-away from the driver's seat prior to starting the car. Anything you do other than drive your car distracts your focus and can lead quickly to an accident, especially with crowded road conditions at many locations.

The National Security Council (NSC) categorizes distracted driving as a public health threat, ranking it with alcohol and speeding as leading factors behind deaths and serious injuries in vehicle accidents.

"I'm often amazed at the risks people take in their cars when they're focused on things such as talking or texting on cell phones, playing with other devices, watching TV, reading books, or listening to music using earphones when driving," said Robert Klebahn, Naval District Washington Regional Fleet and Family Support Program (FFSP) manager. "Not only are they a danger to themselves, but also to every other vehicle in their vicinity."

However, distracted driving is just one way people are at risk. Recreational activities can provide as much danger as driving when proper precautions are ignored.

According to Maiello, commands provide a local hazards brief that identifies high-risk recreational activities. The brief provides safety tips to avoid unintended consequences. For more information about local hazards in your area, contact your base security office.

The Navy remains committed to educating personnel of the importance in being aware of their



150521-N-VT117-013 The Pre-Commissioning Unit Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) Sailors attempt to cycle carts around cones while wearing goggles that simulated alcohol impairment during the command's 2015 Safety Expo at Huntington Hall. The event was designed to operate a motor vehicle. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Patrick Grieco/Released)

surroundings. Safety-awareness campaigns sponsored by the Naval Safety Center also provide insight and training on ways to be situationally aware and safe.