



U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS CENTER

4905 Ruf Ave. Fort Rucker, AL 36362-5363
Comm. (334) 255-3770 Fax (334) 255-2609
<https://safety.army.mil>

Drunk driving a focus for leaders in December

Julie Shelley
Directorate of Communication and Public Affairs
U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center

December is National Impaired Driving Prevention Month, and while not an official Army observance, it will serve as an important opportunity for leaders to engage their Soldiers on the hazards of drunk driving before the holiday exodus.

At present, alcohol is not a major factor in most private motor vehicle accidents involving Soldiers, according to Walt Beckman, program manager with the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center's Driving Directorate. Yet the Army does experience a handful of drunk driving crashes every year.

"Alcohol is currently only a minor issue compared to other indiscipline-related fatal accidents," he said, noting four fatalities during fiscal 2015 where drinking was suspected. "Speeding and failure to wear a seat belt lead the pack in PMV-4 accidents, and speeding is the leading killer in PMV-2 accidents."

Even so, four Soldiers lost to alcohol-related incidents is unacceptable for Army leaders, and a similar zero-tolerance policy inspired Mothers Against Drunk Driving to begin raising awareness on the subject more than 30 years ago.

"In December 1982, President Ronald Reagan signed a presidential proclamation announcing National Drunk and Drugged Driving Awareness Week," explained Pamela Morton, state victim coordinator for MADD Alabama. "MADD was a key member of his presidential commission on drunk driving, and over time that awareness week has evolved into a month-long observance."

Statistics from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration show the rate of drunk driving is highest among 21- to 25-year-olds, with males more likely than females to drive impaired, Morton said. With many Soldiers falling into that age bracket, it is critical that leaders talk with their formations on the importance of drinking responsibly.

"They should encourage their Soldiers to use designated drivers," Beckman said. "Utilize the buddy system and phone someone if you or your designated driver is too drunk to drive."

The effects of alcohol also magnify other seasonal hazards during winter, which can be deadly for even the most careful of drivers.

"Weather always plays a factor," Beckman said. "Keep that in mind when going out to a party."

For more information on MADD's efforts during December, visit <http://www.madd.org/blog/prevention-month.html>. The USACRC also offers safe driving tips, training and multimedia products at <https://safety.army.mil>.