



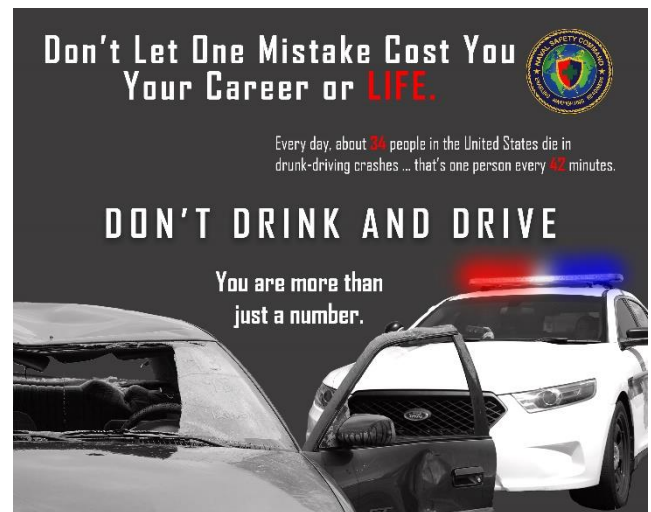
NAVAL SAFETY COMMAND SAFETY AWARENESS DISPATCH



Drunk Driving Mishaps

We hate to be the bearer of bad news, but your math teacher was right. You *do* need math as an adult – or at least a working knowledge of equations. In this dispatch, we're using one simple equation ($\text{Drinking} + \text{Driving} = x$) to make our point. When poor decisions meet a moving vehicle, the result is almost always negative. And it's not just you that's at risk – it's the other people out there on the road. From lengthy hospital stays to lifelong disabilities and even fatalities (*or even jail time*), the consequences speak for themselves. We hope the following examples encourage you to stay out of the driver's seat if you have *anything* to drink. We're all for having a good time, just have it responsibly *and* safely.

- **Vehicle vs. Guardrail.** Just because you loved bumper cars as a kid doesn't mean you should reenact them as an adult. This point hit home early one morning when our Sailor, with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .12%, got behind the wheel. He then drove into a guardrail, ricocheting off the road and into the median before finally coming to a stop. Fortunately, no one else was harmed in this real-life version of a theme park ride, but our Sailor wasn't so lucky. With a fractured upper spine and a bruised lung, we can only hope this was a life lesson learned the first time. —*This is a perfect example of why it's important to have a plan to get home any time alcohol is involved. While our Sailor was lucky (mostly lucky anyway) this time, remember that luck is not a course of action. Be smarter than him: line up a ride, use a designated driver or make other arrangements before that first drink.*
- **No Joy in Joyriding.** While we can laugh a little at some mishaps, others are *sobering* reminders of how quickly – and badly – things can go wrong when alcohol is involved with driving. Three Marines were out riding their motorcycles, enjoying the day and the open road. After hours of riding, they stopped for a break at one rider's home and had a few drinks. That's when the day took a terrible turn. Instead of staying home, the trio decided to take one more ride. Not long into the trip, the Marine at the front revved his engine, causing the motorcycle's back wheel to slide, throwing him from the bike. When the Marines riding behind him stopped to help, they found their friend lying motionless. Emergency services were called, and the first Marine was rushed to the hospital before being airlifted to another hospital where he ended up in the Neurological ICU. Sadly, this is not a story that ends well; less than a month later, the Marine was removed from life support and passed away. —*This story is a stark reminder of the devastating consequences that can happen when we mix alcohol and driving. The Marine who died had a BAC well over the legal limit. Whether you're behind the wheel or on a motorcycle, having a plan to get home safely is non-negotiable. If you're riding, gear up every time, the right PPE could be the part of the equation that keeps you alive when things go sideways.*
- **Phone It In.** Let's start with a simple piece of [obvious] advice: Telephone poles are immovable objects and should be avoided at all costs. Unfortunately, the Sailor in this instance had to learn that the hard way. After enjoying a wedding celebration (*with drinks*), our Sailor decided to drive home. He thought he was good to go but his .14% BAC thought differently. Shortly after entering the road, he crossed the median into oncoming traffic and then veered off entirely, crashing into a telephone pole. The impact was so severe that the telephone pole snapped at the base. Remarkably, the Sailor walked away with only a minor shoulder injury, but we're confident that both his vehicle and the telephone pole will never be the same again. —*While this sounds like a classic "hold my beer" story, don't be fooled; this could have easily ended horribly. It's amazing he didn't kill himself or someone else! Thankfully he hit a phone pole and not another car head on when he swerved into oncoming traffic! Any time you mix alcohol and vehicles; the law of averages is sure to work against you. At the risk of sounding harsh: Don't be stupid. You're risking other people's lives too, not just yours. Make smart choices every time.*



Drunk Driving Mishaps

- **Don't Abandon the Plan.** Once again, we find ourselves at the scene of another wedding marked by questionable decisions. This time, however, our Sailor had a plan (*"Excellent, Smithers"*). After an evening of celebration and drinking, it appears bar hopping sounded like a great idea. Initially, the Sailor had a designated driver (DD) who drove the group safely from bar to bar (*well done! We applaud him for making sound decisions—at least at first*). As the night wore on, our Sailor began to feel tired and, when the DD wasn't ready to leave, that's when things took a turn. Around 0200, abandoning the good plan and sound decisions, the Sailor decided the best way to get home was to drive (*Why, oh why?!*). He took the car (*leaving his DD behind*) and headed for home. While going at the theoretically manageable speed limit of 35 mph, he under corrected on a turn and became a spectacular example of why he should have stuck with his first plan (*the DD one*). He left the road, crashed into a ditch, hit a utility pole, rolled the car three times, and finally landed on a fence. The Sailor's one wise decision was to wear a seatbelt, so amazingly he was able to crawl out of the car and call 911. At the hospital, it was determined the Sailor's BAC was .24% and he had sustained a broken foot and a concussion. —*The moral of the story: if you're smart enough to plan for a designated driver, be smart enough to stick with that plan, even when you're tired (and drunk). If you're the DD, don't let your friends make bad drunk decisions! Keep the keys and see they get home safe.*
- **Trees Only Drink Water.** Our last example is another reminder that recognizing an immovable object is an important life skill. It also reinforces the timeless truth that nothing good ever happens after midnight, especially when you're drunk. Sadly, our Sailor became the poster child for bad decisions when he spent the evening drinking at a local bar. With a BAC of .22% it's safe to say he had been there for quite a while. This is when his terrible decision making really kicked in and he decided that driving home made perfect sense. At around 0400, he left the road and drove into a ditch before colliding with a tree. To no one's surprise (*maybe the tree, but he wasn't in the report so we can't be sure*) his car was damaged in the collision and when the police arrived, he was arrested and spent the night in jail. —*It is important to remember that getting behind the wheel of a car while drunk affects the safety of everyone on the road. While this incident only injured a tree and the Sailor's vehicle, it could have been worse. If you plan to drink, make a plan ahead of time. Call a friend, use a rideshare, or find another safe way home. Any of those ways will get you home faster (and cheaper) than if you wind up in the hospital or jail from driving after drinking.*

Key Takeaways

Decisions you make about drinking and driving don't just affect you – they affect everyone around you on the road. Poor personal choices can have far-reaching consequences, including compromising the overall readiness and effectiveness of the mission. What you do during off-duty hours matters and can lead to life-altering outcomes.

1. **Do not drink and drive.** This should go without saying, but apparently we have to keep saying it. If you consume any amount of alcohol, do not operate a vehicle or motorcycle under any circumstances. It's not worth the risks of killing or maiming yourself or someone else, going to prison, or even just wrecking your car. A ride-share home or waiting for your DD to take you is way cheaper.
2. **Have a plan (and stick to it).** If you plan to drink away from home, decide on a safe and responsible way to get home beforehand. You can drink **OR** you can drive—you can't do both. Relying on last-minute decisions (*especially drunk decisions*) increases the risk of poor judgment.
3. **Proper PPE is essential.** For motorcycle riders, wear your helmet and personal protective equipment. Even if you're sober, some drivers out there aren't. Your gear can be the difference between life and death if they hit you (*which happens too often*).

Please visit our [101 Critical Days of Summer 2025](#) page for additional resources.

And remember, "Let's be careful out there."