

BRAVO Zulu

MSF Honors NAS Fallon's Motorcycle Training

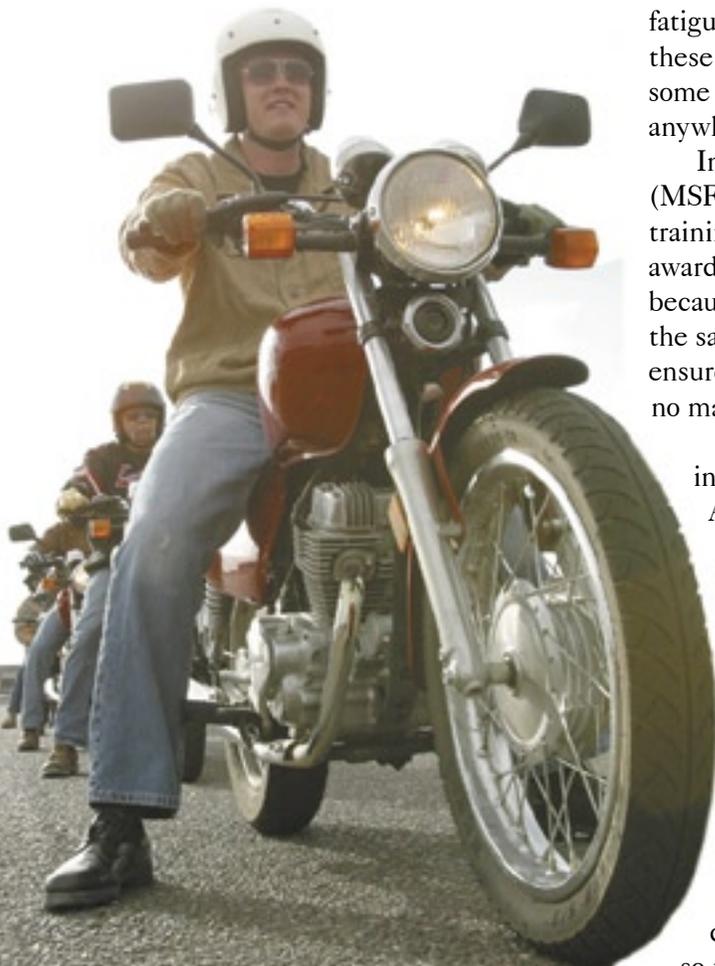
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NAS Fallon Public Affairs

Naval Safety Center records for FY06 show that, as of May 12, 2006, motorcycle crashes have killed 17 Sailors and nine Marines. Common factors are speed, aggressive driving, and fatigue. Among those spearheading efforts to reduce these numbers is NAS Fallon, Nev., which provides some of the best motorcycle-safety training available anywhere in the Navy.

In June 2005, the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) recognized NAS Fallon's motorcycle-safety-training program with an "outstanding" award. This award was based on the command's uniqueness because of locality, its contract with the state, and the safety-office staff's commitment to manage and ensure the training program is provided to everyone, no matter what.

NAS Fallon's motorcycle-safety-training program includes two courses. As explained by Sharon Alexander, an occupational health and safety specialist at the base, "Our basic course provides the fundamentals for safe riding, and our experienced rider's course serves as a refresher or way to improve your skills."

The basic course is 20 to 24 hours long; it begins on Friday evenings and ends Sunday afternoons. Full-day sessions last about eight hours and involve classroom and field exercises on a specific course laid out in a large parking lot on base. "This course is designed to teach the basic fundamentals and to help develop the capabilities of motorcycle operators so they can be safe motorcyclists," said AO1 Rex Gallino, a RiderCoach instructor. "The riders learn



both the physical and mental skills that are imperative for operating a motorcycle. They also learn how to manage risk. My goal is to help them develop good mental riding strategies.”

The classes usually are limited to 11 students, and the availability of the course depends on the rule of supply and demand. “We try our best to give everyone a chance to take this course,” said Alexander. “We do have certain requirements, though. First, anyone on base interested in taking the course must be pre-screened to determine priority to attend the course. Second, all students are required to have a valid license with a motorcycle certification (M/C) endorsement or a valid license with an M/C learner’s permit.”

Students who have a learner’s permit and successfully complete the course may present their Motorcycle Rider’s Course certificate to Nevada’s Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and receive a full M/C endorsement after paying a fee. “Most students who enroll in this class possess at least a learner’s permit,” said Alexander. “Those who don’t have an M/C endorsement or an M/C learner’s permit still may take the class, but they do so at their own expense.”

The course is free to military and DoD civilians attached to NAS Fallon through a contract with the State of Nevada, office of traffic safety, motorcycle-safety program. Civilians from the surrounding area also may enroll. “Because NAS Fallon is located in a remote area, it’s ideal for civilians from many different areas to receive training here,” said Alexander.

While military and DoD motorcycle operators (those who possess a motorcycle and know the basics of riding one) have top priority for the class, it’s also available to those who don’t even own a motorcycle. “I call these folks the ‘wannabes,’” said Alexander. “They’re people who are thinking about buying a motorcycle or just are interested in the course itself.” The State of Nevada provides the motorcycles and supplies.

Instructors include four military and DoD civilians who have successfully completed the MSF’s RiderCourse RiderCoach Preparation Course and have gone through nine days of intensive training. “These instructors are the backbone of the Motorcycle Safety



Course,” said Alexander. “They are committed and do a really good job of teaching students and ensuring they receive the best training possible.”

Instructors are required to be licensed motorcyclists who ride on a frequent basis. They also must have several years of experience, and their DMV traffic record has to be clean. Why do people sign up to teach the course on a volunteer basis? For RiderCoach Gallino, who teaches the basic course, it was to share some of his 24 years of riding experiences with fellow riders. “I love to take beginners and teach them what it takes to safely operate a motorcycle for the first time and then watch their excitement as they learn those skills,” he said.

Recognition of their motorcycle-safety-training program hasn’t stopped NAS Fallon from continuing their quest for excellence. The base is committed to preventing motorcycle crashes along Nevada’s stretches of long, empty highways and making the roads safer for riders and motorists alike. ■