

The Rest of the Story...

Navy DC1(SW) Neal Beard wanted to share some research information on fatigued driving because he doesn't want any other Sailor or Marine to face the same pain and suffering. He urges people to follow six common-sense steps before taking a trip:

- Allow enough time.
- Don't speed to get there or return.
- Get plenty of rest, and beware of fatigue.
- Notify someone about your plans—where you're going, when you're leaving, and when you'll return.
- Carry emergency contact information in the vehicle.
- Wear your seat belts.

Petty Officer Beard also passed along several other statistics in a presentation he did to share his story:

- One of five drivers will be involved in a traffic crash this year.
- Motor-vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among people younger than 44 years of age; they're also the No. 1 cause of head and spinal-cord injuries.
- About 35,000 people die each year in motor-vehicle mishaps (about half could be saved simply by wearing seat belts).
- In a 30-mph collision, an unbelted, 160-pound person can strike another passenger, go through a windshield, or hit the interior with a 4,800-pound force. A common cause of death and injury to children is from unbuckled adults.
- One in four serious injuries happen when occupants are ejected from a vehicle.
- Eight of 10 children who die in crashes would survive if an approved child-safety seat or seat belts were used and secured properly.

Here are a few more facts about Petty Officer Beard's mishap and its aftermath:

- The tractor-trailer driver quit his job and refused to drive again because of the death of Breana and Brandon Beard. He did so, even though the mishap was not his fault. What he saw and thought had been a suitcase flying from the car in reality was Breana being ejected.
- Neal's family told him about the Oklahoma state trooper who had helped to find and tell them about the mishap. Neal wanted to meet the officer



Navy photo by Fred Klinckenberger

Petty Officer Beard's left arm is a reminder of what happened Oct. 25, 2003. This photo was taken 19 months after the crash.

and to thank him personally. Before that meeting could happen, though, an unknown suspect shot and killed Trooper Nick Green near Devol, Okla. The trooper had stopped to check what apparently was a disabled vehicle. When dispatch didn't hear from him, a county deputy was sent to the scene and found Trooper Green's body. An in-car camera showed the suspect had been cooking methamphetamine on the side of the road and got caught. A fight broke out, ending in the trooper's death. He left a wife and three daughters.

- In one last twist of fate, Neal's grandmother (Grandma Beard) died on the very day of his mishap!

For more information on the Naval Safety Center's traffic-safety program and off-duty-mishap efforts, visit our website at www.safetycenter.navy.mil/ashore/motorvehicle/. The Oklahoma Department of Public Safety's website (oktrooper.com/memorial.html#31) honors Trooper Nick Green and other troopers lost in the line of duty. 📌