

Commander's Perspectives



Did you know Hospitalman Derek Eames?

Probably not. I didn't either. It's a big Navy.

You probably haven't been to Knotts Island, either. It's a big country.

This Sailor and this little town in North Carolina have something tragic in common. HN Eames was the first Sailor killed in a car wreck this fiscal year. By April 24, the names of 87 other Sailors and Marines were added to the grim list. Knotts Island is where the second fatal car wreck took place, which means there are 87 other places where a few seconds of fatal mistakes and mayhem killed one of our personnel—a shipmate, a brother or sister, a spouse, a son or daughter.

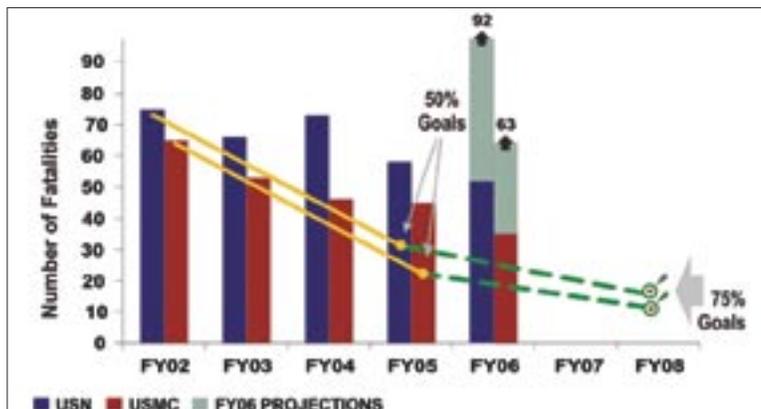
The highway—especially at certain times, in certain places, and with certain kinds of people behind the wheel—is a very dangerous place. It doesn't have to be, but it is. We can all understand why the roads leading into Baghdad and Basra are dangerous: our enemies are putting IEDs there. It is harder to understand the death toll on our peaceful, well-engineered, well-paved roads. Yet, we still end up with those sad little roadside memorials, with names we rarely recognize, and the bedraggled plastic flowers.

Why? For one thing, the average American driver is mediocre, if not lousy. He or she learned how to drive a long time ago and has gained way too many bad habits. As a nation, we are in a hurry. We speed and tailgate. Too many people still think they can drink and drive. And the typical 20-year-old still feels invulnerable, still believes that bad things are going to happen to others, not to them. Changing these attitudes and trends is tough.

By now I'm sure you've heard that we're having a terrible year. For the Navy, our traffic death rate to date is the worst since 1990, and the Marines have had only one worse year since 1991. We have to do something.

Fortunately, there are lots of things to try, and this handbook will describe some of them. In the major sections—Planning, Training, Driving, Preventing and Reporting—you'll find a wealth of ideas, guidance, news and best practices that you can adapt and apply at your command. Tragically, it is too late for Hospitalman Derek Eames, and the other 87 Sailors and Marines. It isn't too late for everyone else. By using the tools in this handbook, you can help keep their names off the list.

RADM George Mayer



USN/USMC PMV Fatalities

FY06: 87 (52 USN / 35 USMC) *24 April 2006

FY05: 105 (26% decrease from FY02)

FY04: 119 (15% decrease from FY02)

FY03: 119

FY02: 140