

DID YOU KNOW?

USMC SAFETY & FORCE PRESERVATION



JUNE 2011

ALCOHOL HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEATH OF 13 MARINES IN FY11

The Marine Corps has suffered 7 off-duty/recreational fatalities so far in fiscal year 2011; alcohol was involved in 5 of the 7 deaths and also in 1 permanent disability. 3 of those fatalities occurred when the Marine involved literally drank to the point of passing out, and never woke up –which is also referred to as “*drinking for sport*” or “*binge drinking*”. Alcohol has also been a contributing factor in 8 of 29 (car/motorcycle/pedestrian) fatalities – totaling 13 confirmed alcohol related fatalities so far this fiscal year ranging from Marines hit by a car while crossing the highway, to falling from a building.

This *Did You Know* notes some of the dangers of abusing or mixing alcohol and prescription medications, and highlights individual Marine fatalities in which alcohol was a contributing factor. It is critical that leaders at all levels continue to educate Marines on the dangers involved in the recreational use of alcohol and prescription drugs, and remain vigilant for the warning signs a Marine abusing these substances may exhibit. Know your Marines and don't let them become one of the statistics below.



USMC ALCOHOL RELATED FATALITIES IN FY11

- A Marine was found unconscious near the barracks duty desk, emergency personnel were unsuccessful in attempts to resuscitate the Marine.
- A Marine was found dead in his driveway by his neighbors who also reported that he came to their house early in the morning and appeared drunk and confused, and then was seen going to his driveway. The medical examiner later reported that he died of hypothermia with cold exposure and chronic alcoholism as contributing factors.
- A Marine's mother found him dead at his home while on leave. The autopsy report later revealed the cause of death was acute morphine intoxication due to heroin use; alcohol was also present in his blood.
- A Marine was on leave in Brazil, and suffered a C-spine injury and water intake while swimming in the surf. Injuries classified as permanent total disability (paralysis of lower limbs).
- A Marine died from head injuries sustained after falling 17 stories from a hotel. He had been consuming alcohol prior to the fall.
- Two Marines were attempting to cross the interstate while walking from Oceanside to Camp Pendleton and were struck by a vehicle travelling northbound. One Marine died and the other suffered several injuries, alcohol was involved in this mishap.
- A Marine was crossing the street (out of the cross walk) while returning from liberty at Fleet Week in New York and was struck by a vehicle traveling along the roadway, he was declared dead at the scene.
- A Marine was riding his motorcycle and was struck by a vehicle driven by another intoxicated Marine. The Marine on the motorcycle was taken to the hospital where he was pronounced dead, the intoxicated Marine is facing criminal charges.
- A Marine was found unresponsive after a night of drinking, and was later pronounced deceased.
- A Marine was traveling at high rate of speed when he lost control of his motorcycle, hit a power control box and was decapitated. It was later determined that he had been drinking prior to the mishap.
- A group of Marines were traveling in a car at a high rate of speed when the driver failed to negotiate a sharp turn, causing the vehicle to lose control and roll several times. The driver was wearing a seat-belt. One of the passengers was not wearing a seat-belt, and was ejected from the vehicle, however both were pronounced dead at the scene.
- A Marine attempted to pass another vehicle and collided head on with a truck, causing both vehicles to flip. He was pronounced dead at the scene, alcohol was involved in this mishap.
- A Marine lost control of his PMV in a curve, and was ejected from vehicle. When emergency personnel arrived he was pronounced dead at the scene, it was later confirmed that he had been using alcohol prior to the mishap.



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DANGERS OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION & LESSONS LEARNED

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), many medications can interact with alcohol, leading to increased risk of illness, injury, or death. Drinking large amounts of alcohol at one time or very rapidly can cause alcohol poisoning, which can lead to coma or death. Abusing most prescription medications can have the same effect. Mixing the two together can be a deadly combination.

Alcohol alone depresses your central nervous system, lowers your inhibitions, and impairs your judgment. Drinking can lead to risky behaviors, such as driving when you shouldn't, not wearing your seatbelt while in a vehicle, or having unprotected sex. If you're around people who are drinking—even if you're not, you have an increased risk of being seriously injured, involved in a car crash, or be affected by violence. At the very least, you may have to deal with people who are out of control, may become sick, or are unable to take care of themselves.

**3 Marines have been killed this year as a result of not wearing a seatbelt *and* drinking & driving combined.
Alcohol = Poor Judgment**

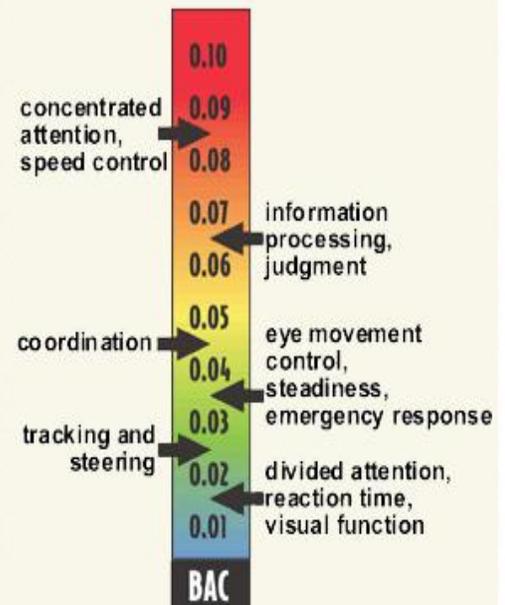
- Alcohol affects everyone. It does so, however, in different ways, depending on your mood, physical condition, personality and the company you keep.
- Drinking alcohol leads to a loss of coordination, poor judgment, slowed reflexes, distorted vision, memory lapses, and even blackouts.
- When alcohol is involved, make a plan and stick to it. Don't let your liberty buddy disappear or deviate from your original plans.
- Don't ever drink and drive, it's not worth it.

EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL & PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

In addition to risk of injury or death as a result of an accident or violence, alcohol and prescription drugs pose a broad range of physiological and psychological dangers if mixed or abused.

- **Neurological** dangers include impaired vision, impaired motor coordination, memory defects, hallucinations, blackouts, and seizures. Long-term abuse can result in permanent damage to the brain.
- **Cardiological** problems include elevated blood pressure and heart rate, risk of stroke and heart failure.
- **Respiratory** dangers include respiratory depression and failure, pneumonia, tuberculosis, and lung abscesses. Additionally, alcohol abuse increases the risk of mouth and throat cancer.
- **Liver disease** caused by chronic alcohol abuse, including alcoholic fatty liver, hepatitis, and cirrhosis, kills over 25,000 Americans each year.

Other physiological dangers include damage to the **gastrointestinal system**, the **pancreas**, and the **kidneys**. In addition, alcohol and drug abuse may cause malnutrition, disrupt the absorption of nutrients in food, and suppress the **immune system**, thus increasing the potential for illness.



- **Psychological** dangers include impaired judgment and verbal ability, apathy, introversion, antisocial behavior, inability to concentrate, **suicidal ideations/thoughts**, and deterioration of relationships with family, friends, and fellow Marines.

