



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **SPEED, ALCOHOL AND FATIGUE: A DRIVER'S WORST ENEMIES**

### **V Corps Safety Office release**

**HEIDELBERG, Germany** –With summer just around the corner, V Corps Soldiers and civilian employees and their families living in Germany will be basking in the delights of outdoor recreation. But even fun in the sun comes with its own set of hazards.

The biggest hazards of summer are related to driving. Over the last three summer seasons, 59 percent of all accidents in V Corps were vehicle-related, according to statistics compiled by the V Corps Safety Office.

As with most potentially hazardous activities, knowing what the risks are and what to beware of is half the battle in avoiding vehicle accidents. Speed, fatigue and alcohol are the causes of most accidents.

To help keep the V Corps family safe this summer season, corps safety officials offer the following information, tips and guidelines about drinking and driving and driving while fatigued.

### **Drinking and driving**

Approximately 100 million adult Americans drink alcoholic beverages. Drinking alcohol is pretty much accepted in today's society, but most adults also recognize that drinking and driving is unacceptable and irresponsible behavior. However, some adults -- and underage teens -- still choose to drink and drive. The result is that at least 55 percent of all fatal accidents involve alcohol use. In addition, alcohol-related accidents cost America more than \$10 billion dollars per year.

Many people are not aware of the effect alcohol has on the ability to drive safely. Alcohol is a depressant that works on the central nervous system, slowing down brain and spinal cord activity. Reaction time and coordination are considerably impaired with increasing intoxication.

BAC, or blood alcohol content, is defined as grams of alcohol per 100 milliliters of blood, or grams of alcohol per 210 liters of breath. The larger the body, the greater the blood supply. Thus, a big person can drink as much as a smaller person and yet have a lower BAC. In United States Army Europe, a driver with a BAC level of 0.05 percent can have his driver's license suspended. At a level of 0.1 percent, his license is permanently revoked. German drinking and driving laws are much harsher; a BAC of 0.05 is the legal limit, however drivers with a BAC of 0.03 may be prosecuted for offenses in which they are involved.

A normal 160-pound person, drinking two drinks in an hour -- 12 ounces of beer, five ounces wine or one-and-a-half ounces of liquor constitutes one drink -- will have a BAC of about .04. The body eliminates alcohol at a rate of approximately one drink per hour. This is only an example, and can vary with each individual. But one result of these facts is that a disproportionate number of drunk drivers and victims of fatal alcohol-related traffic accidents are young people.

The best defense against alcohol-related accidents is to drink moderately and not drive after drinking. But other ways to help avoid drunk-driving accidents include:

- Planning celebrations that eliminate the need to drive
- Urging friends not to drive if they have had too much to drink
- Letting someone be a designated driver

### **Fatigue**

A tired driver can be just as deadly as drinking driver. It's a problem that can be greatest in the summer months, when heat and physical activity prior to driving can cause fatigue to set in more quickly.

There are some things drivers can do to help increase their chances of staying alert:

Drink plenty of liquids: Automotive fluids evaporate faster when it's warm. So do the liquids that cool the human body. In peak heat, drivers should try to stop often for non-alcoholic cold drinks or keep a thermos or bottle of water handy on the road.

Open the window periodically: Today's cars are so airtight that over a period of time, the amount of oxygen inside the car can decrease. Opening a window periodically to let in some fresh air -- even hot air -- helps build up the oxygen level.

Think light: After a big meal, people tend to feel groggy and less alert. Lighter meals will help drivers to stay awake and aware.

Keep your composure: As the temperature rises, people's attention span and tolerance toward other drivers gets shorter. Getting steamed just makes it harder to think clearly and drive safely.

Vary the route: Drivers can help themselves to stay interested and alert by trying new routes to places they visit often.

Include rest in the plan: Drivers who plan ahead and make sure they start their trip completely rested; avoid driving during normal sleep hours; take at least a 15-minute rest stop every two hours, and limit each day's driving to no more than 350 miles or eight hours on the road, can best avoid fatigue.

Turn it up: Increasing the radio volume or the air conditioning level can help keep drivers awake.

Even if a driver does all he can to stay awake, sometimes the body just plain needs rest. Some signs that should warn a driver that he's getting fatigued include:

- His eyes close or lose focus by themselves
- He has trouble keeping his head up
- He can't stop yawning
- He has wandering, disconnected thoughts

- He doesn't remember driving the last few miles
- He drifts between lanes, tailgates, or misses traffic lights, markings or signs
- He keeps jerking his car back into his lane

A driver who has even one of these symptoms may be in danger of falling asleep at the wheel, and should pull off the road and get some rest.

