

# Don't Let Your Guard Down

*Story and Photos by PA3 Barry J. Bena, District Seven Public Affairs*

Coast Guard Seventh District Commander Rear Adm. David Kunkel officially kicked off the "Don't Let Your Guard Down" safe driver campaign Jan. 25 at Coast Guard Integrated Support Command Miami.

The campaign's purpose is to help reduce vehicle related mishaps within the Coast Guard and was created by members of the Maintenance and Logistics Command Atlantic in October 2007 and adopted by the Coast Guard Atlantic Area command.

"This campaign was directly brought on because of the commandant's message regarding traffic safety and his concern for the amount of traffic fatalities (occurring) within the Coast Guard," said Lt. Kim Chesteen, the Seventh District's safety and environmental health officer.

Statistical analysis of member-involved traffic accidents revealed the Seventh District has consistently out paced every other Coast Guard district in the number of traffic-related fatalities.

There are many components to the "Don't Let Your Guard Down" campaign.

A huge component of the campaign is the aggressive visual portion called "Street Smart".

The "Street Smart" program is taught by Florida EMTs from the not-for-profit organization Stay Alive From Education, or S.A.F.E. The training features photos and descriptions of real-life trauma incidents and underscores the importance of making responsible decisions with respect to alcohol consumption and seat belt use.



*Vince Easevoli, executive director of the Stay Alive from Education program, holds a broken egg after demonstrating the effects of inertia to Coast Guard members at the Integrated Support Command Miami, Jan. 24. Easevoli walked Coast Guard members through what happens at a trauma scene using the medical equipment paramedics employ daily in their jobs.*

The training is open to all Coast Guard members and their dependents, and to date, has reached more than 600 Coast Guard personnel.

During the 2007 Navy Occupational Safety and Hazard conference, the Department of Defense recognized a need for increased awareness and has seen the number of traffic accidents decrease since implementing the "Street Smart" training.

"We provide the information to allow people the opportunity to make the right choices when it comes to drinking and driving and wearing their seatbelts," said Vince Easevoli, executive director of the S.A.F.E. program.

An important factor in the campaign is how the training affects and impacts the troops.

Chesteen said they are getting very positive feedback from Coast Guard personnel in all paygrades who have taken the “Street Smart” training.

“When you’re able to captivate an audience for more than 90 minutes like the “Street Smart” trainers, that is an outstanding thing,” said Chesteen.

The Coast Guard hopes that with some training and the “Street Smart” program, the “Don’t Let Your Guard Down” campaign can be successful and can significantly reduce the number of vehicle related fatalities.

“As District Commander I care deeply about the personal safety of each member of our team, our family, as well as the safety of (their) loved ones,” said Kunkel. “We all must do more to protect ourselves, our shipmates and members of the community. I charge each member of our Coast Guard family to make driver safety a priority in their daily lives.”



*Petty Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Class (BM) Christopher Hernandez-Tapia gets strapped onto a backboard by Vince Easevoli, executive director of the Stay Alive from Training program, and Joseph McCluan, assistant director of S.A.F.E, as part of the training program. The event kicked off a district-wide safety campaign designed to reduce accidents and fatalities.*

**USCG**