

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

News Release #41-14

April 18, 2014

Contact: Ed Barker

850.452.4858

(DSN) 922.4858

(FAX) 850.452.4900

Naval Submarine School Emphasizes Motorcycle Safety with a “Blessing of the Bikes”

GROTON, Conn. – The Naval Submarine School (NSS) conducted a motorcycle safety inspection including a mechanical check of the rider’s motorcycle, followed by a Blessing of the Bikes April 18.

The peer-managed inspection was intended to refresh and remind riders of all skill levels and experiences of the importance of proper safety while operating a motorcycle, using the T-CLOCK mnemonic developed by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation. Through the inspection the individual letters stand for specific areas to check: T — Tires & Wheels, C — Controls, L — Lights, O — Oil, C — Chassis, and K — Kickstand).

The riders, working with the Naval Submarine School Safety Officer, Dale Rehberg, and the school house department master chiefs, inspected one another’s rides, correcting problems where necessary.

The Navy Safety Center reports motorcycle injuries and deaths have decreased in the last five years. During 2013, 17 Sailors died in motorcycle accidents, and Rehberg believes events like the Blessing of the Bikes are critical to helping to continue to reduce fatalities.

The Blessing of the Bikes and their riders, says Capt. Cameron Fish, NSS Senior Chaplain, is similar to the tradition of blessing fishing fleets and their crews.

"It's not only about the bikes," Fish said. "The ceremony is just as much about the special bond between the bikes and their riders as well as the camaraderie among those who ride."

Naval Submarine School Command Master Chief (Submarines) Chad Schultz, himself a motorcyclist, is an experienced rider.

"When I saw what a large population of riders we have at the school house and the age range, I thought it would be nice to organize a ride," Schultz said.

"Motorcyclists conduct sponsored rides throughout the year for many different reasons. Ours is intended to promote safety and ensure our motorcycles are safe to ride.

"What better way to kick off the summer riding season than to have the Sub School chaplain say a prayer for us riders and give our bikes a blessing," he continued. "I'd like to think the riders will listen closely to the chaplain and really hear his words, positively affecting how they ride. We also inspected each other's bikes for safety. Hopefully the public recognizes that when they see a motorcyclist with all of the safety gear on properly riding a motorcycle in good repair, the rider is likely to be a Navy Sailor who always rides safe."

As the Naval Submarine School Safety Officer, Rehberg's work-day concerns are personal safety and safe practices in the use of school house training devices, but he sees many of those on-the-job values as integral for motorcyclist safety as well.

"Training and experience are the most proven ways to prevent accidents," Rehberg said. "Every base has motorcycle safety courses and it's incumbent upon every command to have a proactive motorcycle safety program in place.

"With spring weather finally arriving across the Northeast, there will be more motorcyclists of all skill levels and experiences sharing the road," he explained. "I always encourage new riders, of any age, to ride with more experienced Sailors until they've gained the experience they need to feel confident in their own abilities to reduce danger and possible hazards."

Electronics Technician 2nd Class (Surface) Edward Macon, a student in Electronics Technician Apprentice Training, has been involved in other command rides. "Last year while I was assigned to Norfolk, Va. we had one," Macon said. "I like riding by myself, but a group ride can be very enjoyable and I appreciate that as a student here the command is telling me they are looking out for me and, in turn, want me to look out for my shipmates."

Seaman Recruit Kevin Kuhn, awaiting class up as a student in the Tactical Computer Network Operations (TCNO) Course, especially likes the feeling that the command has his back. "It feels great to know that I have other riders around me to help if I need it," Kuhn said. "In a way, that was one of the reasons why I came into the Navy. Knowing that I could go as far as I wanted by myself, but no matter how far I went there was always a shipmate looking out for me and counting on me to look out for him."

The long term goal, says Schulz, is to have an annual event. Hopefully next year it doubles in size and continues to grow," he said. "I'd also like to organize another run closer to the summer's end to cap the season."

For information on the Naval Submarine School, visit <http://www.netc.navy.mil/centers/slc/nss/>

USN

Story by William Kenny, Submarine Learning Center Public Affairs