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Captain's Call

Smoking To Be Extinguished On Submarines

Commander, Submarine Forces has effected a policy April 8 banning smoking below decks aboard all U.S. Navy submarines.

The smoking ban, announced via naval message, will become effective no later than Dec. 31, 2010.

The impetus behind the change of policy is the health risks to non-smokers, specifically exposure to secondhand smoke.



According to a 2006 Surgeon General's report on involuntary exposure to tobacco smoke, there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Non-smokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke increase their risk of developing heart and lung disease.

Subsequent to the 2006 Surgeon General report, the Submarine Force chartered the Naval Submarine Medical Research Laboratory to conduct a study on U.S. submarines. The study indicated that non-smoking Sailors were exposed to measurable levels of environment tobacco smoke, also called secondhand smoke. The yearlong study was conducted in 2009 on nine different submarines, including at least one from each class of submarines in the force.

In conjunction with the policy change, cessation assistance to Sailors is being offered. The program will incorporate education techniques and nicotine replacement therapy, such as nicotine patches and nicotine gum, to assist in kicking the smoking habit. In keeping with current submarine policy, drugs such as Zyban and Chantix are not authorized.