



Naval Safety Center

LESSONS LEARNED



LL 20-25

“Keep your arms and legs inside the ride at all times.”

Anyone who has been on an amusement park ride knows the familiar phrase, “please keep your arms and legs inside the ride at all times.” This sage advice is relevant to many mishaps the military has experienced over the years. In this lesson, we’ll look at the consequences of not heeding this guidance.



- A Marine was driving an M997 ambulance variant Humvee during training in a densely wooded training area. When he realized his door was not latched properly, he extended his arm out of the vehicle to adjust the latch, but, while attempting to do so, he veered slightly off the trail and near a tree. The tree caught the Marine’s arm, pinning it back into the window. The Marine was medevaced and ultimately lost his arm. — *From this horrible accident, we can see the best action would be to stop the vehicle to fix the door, instead of trying to do so and operate the vehicle simultaneously.*

- On the other side of the world and the other side of the road, a Marine experienced first-hand (*or elbow, in this case*), the potential for vehicles to sideswipe each other. The potential is even greater when drivers are unfamiliar with their vehicles or area. This Marine was serving as an assistant driver (A-driver) for an incidental driver’s course overseas, so he was sitting in the right-front passenger seat. He was in an M1123 up-armored variant Humvee, casually riding with his elbow stuck out of the window. That seems innocent enough, but in the country where they were operating, vehicles are driven on the left side of the road, opposite of what we are used to in the United States. That directional difference meant that his elbow was in the path of an oncoming Humvee (*from the same driver’s course*) that (*pause for effect*) sideswiped his vehicle. The side-view mirror and armor-plated window of the other vehicle struck the Marine’s elbow, damaging his muscles and ligaments and putting him in the hospital for a week. — *In hindsight, we can see the hazards. Wrong-way traffic...student drivers...and big vehicles. Please keep all of yourself in the vehicle whenever possible.*

- To prove that Marines aren’t the only ones subject to this type of injury, a Navy mishap rounds out our examples for today. Fitting with the Navy theme, this mishap took place on a boat. In this case, a Sailor was conducting booming operations on a small craft offloading equipment. There must have been somebody this Sailor was trying to impress through a demonstration of strength, because while attempting to boom off of a C-tractor (tug), he extended his arm out the pilot-house window and tried to push off of the C-Tractor to prevent the two craft from brushing against each other. His attempt proved to be less of a demonstration of strength and more of a demonstration of how one gets their hand smashed between two vessels. Fortunately, this only resulted in bruising and a few days of light duty. — *Kudos to our Sailor for wanting to protect the equipment, but using your hand to try to keep thousands of pounds of metal from bumping together isn’t the best plan.*

Key Takeaways / Lessons Learned

The takeaway here is simply to heed the amusement park advice, “**Keep your arms and legs inside the vehicle**” as much as possible. Operating or riding in military vehicles isn’t like a joy ride down Route 66. These vehicles are often required to be taken on tight trails, or close to one another, or loaded onto ships with incredibly tight spaces — which is all more difficult considering the size of some of the vehicles. Being part of the military means being exposed to specific hazards, but let’s try to reduce exposing your limbs to those hazards as much as possible.