

## Slippery Roads Ahead: Winter Motorcycle Safety Tips

By Juan Aguilar

The Naval Enterprise reported 18 motorcycle crashes, with three resulting in fatalities during December. California led in motorcycle crashes for the 23rd consecutive month with 10 reported – accounting for over half of the crashes (56%) overall. Florida and Virginia followed with two reported crashes each, equaling 22% of the incidents. The remaining crashes occurred in various areas throughout the United States.

Based on December's reporting, 39% of the incidents involved riders 25 years old and under; 67% involved personnel E-5 or below, continuing the upward trend of crashes occurring amongst our younger and lower-ranked riders. Please note that accurately reporting individuals' ages in the RMI reporting system is essential for identifying at-risk demographics.

Winter brings unique challenges to motorcyclists, particularly those serving in the Navy and Marine Corps, who often ride under demanding conditions. These

can include unfamiliar roadways due to frequent rotations or limited time in the seat, leading to inconsistent riding skills and reduced proficiency. Whether stationed in colder climates or operating in regions with fluctuating temperatures, safety on two wheels is paramount.

Maintaining your motorcycle for winter conditions is the first step. Before riding, ensure your bike is in top condition by checking tire pressure and tread depth, as cold weather can reduce tire performance. Switching to winter-grade oil and ensuring a fully charged battery can help prevent common cold weather issues.

Wearing the proper gear is crucial for winter riding – a full-face helmet with anti-fogging features is key for clear visibility in cold conditions. Layering with moisture-wicking base layers, insulated gloves and waterproof jackets keep riders warm without sacrificing flexibility. Additionally, bulkier gloves and gear, essential for winter, may impede mobility and comfort. Reflective gear is also key, as it improves visibility during the shorter days

### At a Glance

<b>USN</b>
Rider fatalities this report: 2
Rider fatalities for FY 26: 8
<b>USMC</b>
Rider fatalities this report: 1
Rider fatalities for FY 26: 3
<b>Totals this report</b>
Non-fatal crashes: 15
Fatalities: 3

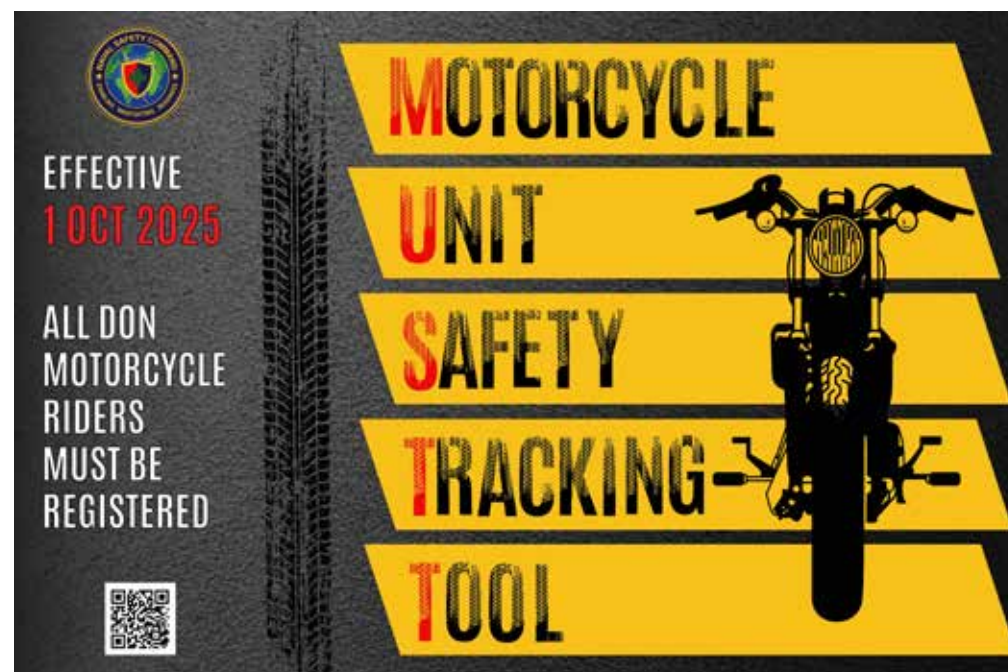
and low-light conditions typical of winter. This combination ensures both warmth and safety on the road.

Adjusting riding techniques is critical when navigating slick winter roads. Temperatures just above freezing can still create ice, particularly on bridges, overpasses and shaded areas. Riders should reduce speed, increase following distances and avoid sudden acceleration, braking or sharp turns to maintain control. A steady, smooth ride is essential for staying safe on icy or wet surfaces.

Visibility is a significant concern during winter riding. Snow, rain and fog can greatly reduce both how well riders can see and how visible they are to others. It's crucial to use headlights, even in daylight, and keep them clean to improve visibility. Maintaining a safe distance from other vehicles not only enhances your visibility but also provides enough space to react in an emergency.

Staying informed about the weather is also essential. Sudden changes, such as unexpected snow or freezing rain, can quickly make roads hazardous. Checking weather forecasts before and during rides helps ensure you're prepared for any shifts in conditions. By following these safety tips, Navy and Marine Corps motorcyclists can ride with confidence, no matter the winter challenges they encounter.

(Continued on page 2)



**EFFECTIVE  
1 OCT 2025**

**ALL DON  
MOTORCYCLE  
RIDERS  
MUST BE  
REGISTERED**

**MOTORCYCLE  
UNIT  
SAFETY  
TRACKING  
TOOL**

QR code

# Winter Tips

(continued from page 1)

As a community, the Navy and Marine Corps must continue prioritizing education, mentorship and accountability in motorcycle operations. Leaders at all levels should ensure riders are not only trained but encouraged to pursue advanced courses, remain licensed and practice defensive riding.

Amid the critical mission of ensuring operational readiness, the diligent efforts of motorcycle safety representatives, supervisors, collateral-duty safety officers and command leadership are instrumental

in keeping your personnel current with their training and licensing.

Detailed and accurate reporting helps ensure the data collected reflects actual circumstances. Comprehensive data allows for identifying patterns and trends, such as common causes, locations or times of day when crashes occur.

Every detail matters in the pursuit of safety. Do not ignore even minor factors as this raises your risk and may result in a collision.

Remove one factor and the crash may not have occurred.

Factors were provided from the crashes on the following pages based on the information presented in the operations and investigator's reports; most are still under investigation.

When reviewing the following crash narratives, consider other factors that may have influenced the mishap. It's a call to action for riders to engage, reflect and ask themselves, "What would I have done differently?"

## Rider Down: Important tool to have

The *Rider Down* reports are indispensable tools in your arsenal and should be integral to safety and training briefs. Their detailed insights and analysis are invaluable in understanding the factors contributing to crashes and formulating preventive measures.

To those with Risk Management Information (RMI) access, we've integrated the *Rider Down* reports within RMI. Once logged into RMI, click on the left-hand tab under the "Pubs and Refs" homepage and proceed to "Motorcycle Rubber Side Down" to view and subscribe to these publications produced by Naval Safety Command for Navy and Marine Corps MSRs, riders and safety professionals.



U.S. Marines and civilians with the Provost Marshal's Office with Headquarters and Support Battalion conduct personal protective equipment, registration, and insurance inspections during Operation Full Stop at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, Dec. 1, 2025. Operation Full Stop is designed to ensure 100% compliance with motorcycle personal protective equipment and legal regulations. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Jacqueline Akamelu)

## By the numbers

- 8 crashes (44%) involved colliding with a moving vehicle.
- 4 crashes (22%) had a rider who ran off the road.
- 3 crashes (17%) had no data provided.
- 3 crashes (17%) involved a rollover/overturn.

## By the clock

- Midnight- 3:59 a.m. – 2 (11%)
- 4 a.m.-7:59 a.m. – 2 (11%)
- 8 a.m. - 11:59 a.m. – 2 (11%)
- noon - 3:59 p.m. – 4 (22%)
- 4 p.m. - 7:59 p.m. – 4 (22%)
- 8 p.m. - 11:59 p.m. – 3 (17%)
- No Data – 1 (6%)

## By the day

Weekdays – 8 (42%)  
Weekend – 10 (58%)



*Rider Down* is a monthly update of motorcycle crashes that occurred throughout the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps. The data in this publication reflects what was reported during the time period covered.

Information contained in the report is based on preliminary data and is provided for hazard

## Rider Down

awareness and training purposes only. The Naval Safety Command recommends Motorcycle Safety Representatives use this information for training and mentorship programs and forward to others who may have an interest.

Crash data can be obtained from Naval Safety Command.



# CRASH REPORTS

## Motorcycle Crash Legend

NR represents information not reported  
**Red entries** represent  
Marine Corps-specific mishaps  
(all times local)

### Fatal Crashes

**Dec. 9, 1 a.m., age NR E-6**

**Location:** Lacey, Washington

**Remarks:** Rider was involved in a motorcycle accident and declared deceased at the scene.

**Dec. 13, 5:10 p.m., 30-year-old E-5**

**Location:** Norfolk, Virginia

**Remarks:** Rider was traveling northbound when they collided with a truck making a turn onto a local road. The rider suffered life-threatening injuries and was transported to hospital, where they later died from their injuries. BRC completed in February 2024 and ARC in March 2025.

**Dec. 23, time NR, 24-year-old E-6**

**Location:** Jacksonville Beach, Florida

**Remarks:** Rider was involved in a fatal motorcycle crash. The rider completed BRC in January 2025.

### Nonfatal Crashes

**Dec. 1, 10 a.m., 20-year-old E-3**

**Location:** San Diego, California

**Remarks:** Rider collided with a vehicle, sustaining minor injuries. The rider received care at a military medical facility, where they were treated and later discharged and received 72 hours SIQ. Rider was wearing all PPE for motorcycle operation and held a valid motorcycle permit.

**Dec. 2, 6:30 p.m., 19-year-old E-2**

**Location:** San Diego, California

**Remarks:** Rider failed to fully engage the kickstand of their motorcycle while returning to the barracks, causing it to fall onto their left leg. The rider was able to free their leg and secure the kickstand without assistance. No loss of consciousness or visible injuries were reported at the time. The rider self-reported to the emergency department the following day, where they were evaluated for left leg pain. They were placed on 72 hours SIQ. The rider was not under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the incident.

**Dec. 4, 8 p.m., 37-year-old E-5**

**Location:** San Diego, California

**Remarks:** Rider was on an unfamiliar road when their motorcycle slid toward a guardrail. The rider was thrown off the bike when it

became stuck between the road and the guardrail. A bystander called emergency responders and the rider was transported by ambulance to an emergency room. The rider was treated for minor injuries and later discharged. The rider was wearing all required PPE, including a helmet, eye protection, gloves, boots and jacket. The rider holds a valid motorcycle license and completed BRC in March 2024.

**Dec. 5, 6:03 p.m., 35-year-old E-7**

**Location:** San Diego, California

**Remarks:** Rider was involved in a collision with another vehicle while traveling northbound on a local interstate. The rider was treated on scene and transferred to a medical facility for minor injuries. He was operating a sports bike. The rider was wearing full PPE including eye protection, boots, gloves, helmet and a jacket. He had a valid motorcycle license/permit and completed BRC in August 2015 and ARC in August 2022.

**Dec. 6, 7:07 a.m., 39-year-old E-6**

**Location:** Tampa, Florida

**Remarks:** Rider was involved in a motorcycle crash while traveling to work. Medical assistance was provided on-site by ambulance, and the rider was transferred to an ER for further care and evaluation. The injuries sustained were non-serious and the rider was deemed stable and discharged home. He used full PPE, including eye protection, boots, gloves, helmet, and jacket. The rider had a valid motorcycle license/permit and completed BRC in February 2024 and ARC in March 2024.

**Dec. 6, 6:03 p.m., age and rank NR**

**Location:** San Diego, California

**Remarks:** Rider was involved in a motorcycle crash with a moving vehicle. He was treated on site and transferred to a medical facility for treatment of minor injuries.

**Dec. 7, 1:50 a.m., 26-year-old E-5**

**Location:** Fallbrook, California

**Remarks:** Rider was driving a motorcycle when they ran off the road and crashed. He sustained a broken clavicle, cracked ribs and a puncture laceration to the left hip and lower back. The rider was hospitalized for four days.

## Acronyms

**ARC:** Advanced Rider Course

**BRC:** Basic Rider Course

**ER:** emergency room

**LLD:** light & limited duty

**NR:** No data or not reported

**PPE:** personal protective equipment

**SIQ:** sick in quarters



# CRASH REPORTS

**Dec. 13, 11 a.m., 29-year-old E-5**

**Location:** Oxnard, California

**Remarks:** Rider was struck by a civilian-operated SUV at an intersection after the rider entered under a green traffic signal. The SUV ran a red light, hitting the rider's motorcycle on the side and causing them to be ejected onto the roadway. The rider lost consciousness and was transported to hospital. Medical providers diagnosed the rider with a broken clavicle, broken sternum, sprained neck and multiple contusions. The rider was hospitalized for two days and issued SIQ for three days and LLD for 30 days, with a follow-up orthopedic evaluation scheduled.

**Dec. 15, 5:50 a.m., 29-year-old E-5**

**Location:** San Diego, California

**Remarks:** Rider was heading to work when a car merged into their lane at high speed on wet roads. Unable to slow down, the rider attempted to split the lane between that car and a pick-up truck in the adjacent lane. The merging car crushed the rider between both vehicles. The rider kept the motorcycle upright and pulled over safely. After assessing minor injury and minimal damage, the rider continued to work.

**Dec. 15, 1:45 p.m., 20-year-old E-4**

**Location:** Honolulu, Hawaii

**Remarks:** Rider was riding down a switchback when they encountered loose, wet gravel on a left-hand curve. The gravel caused the motorcycle to lose traction, resulting in a fall onto the left side and onto the rider. After the mishap, the rider got up, righted the motorcycle and continued home. The following day, the rider reported leg pain and sought medical evaluation. The rider returned to work the same day.

**Dec. 15, 9:40 p.m., 20-year-old E-4**

**Location:** Camp Pendleton, California

**Remarks:** Rider was heading downhill on base when an oncoming driver with high beams on in foggy conditions blinded them, causing the rider to run off the road and lay the bike down. The rider suffered minor injuries and received seven days of LLD.

**Dec. 19, 8:30 p.m., 28-year-old E-5**

**Location:** Virginia Beach, Virginia

**Remarks:** Rider was operating a motorcycle when an SUV ran a stop sign and entered their right-of-way, then fled the scene without stopping. To avoid the collision, the rider swerved to the right but lost control of the bike in the process. The crash resulted in the rider being thrown over the handlebars. A friend transported the rider and motorcycle from the scene to their residence. The rider later sought medical attention and was transported to hospital, where X-rays

revealed a fractured collarbone. He was discharged with medication and follow-up instructions.

**Dec. 20, 1:10 p.m., 30-year-old E-6**

**Location:** Salado, Texas

**Remarks:** A rider, operating a Yamaha R1 motorcycle, was involved in an mishap on a road in Salado. The incident occurred while the rider was attempting a U-turn and lost control due to an uneven surface, causing them to fall. No other personnel were involved. The rider was transported by ambulance to a medical center in the area. He was wearing full PPE, possessed a valid motorcycle license and had completed motorcycle operator continuation training, which is valid until 2027.

**Dec. 21, 12 p.m., 22-year-old E-3**

**Location:** Buena Park, California

**Remarks:** Rider was operating a motorcycle when they collided with a vehicle, resulting in road rash and a sore lower back. The rider was given five days LLD.

**Dec. 21, 1 p.m., 19-year-old E-2**

**Location:** New Jersey

**Remarks:** Rider was involved in a motorcycle crash while on transfer leave in New Jersey. A vehicle pulled out in front of the rider, resulting in a collision. The rider was taken to an ER and diagnosed with a minor fracture of the forearm and a broken nose. The rider was wearing full PPE. The rider holds a valid motorcycle license, which was endorsed before entering military service and has not attended any military rider courses.

*(Even though the following incident is not a reportable PMV-2 event, it is worth referencing for training purposes.)*

**Dec. 17, 12:15 p.m., 22-year-old E-2**

**Location:** Jacksonville, Florida

**Remarks:** A service member was apprehended for reckless operation of a vehicle on base after driving a motorcycle at 80 mph in a 30-mph zone. The service member was taken into custody by base police and was later released to their chain of command. Fortunately, they live to recount the tale of their misdeeds another day.

***Note: An important reminder for all riders - when motorists fail to notice riders or when riders engage in reckless behavior, they increase the likelihood of crashes. The risks of motorcycling are already big and reckless actions only compound this danger.***



**ENABLING WARFIGHTING READINESS**  
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## USN AND USMC MOTORCYCLE CRASHES FY 2026 TO DATE

