

RIDER DOWN

APRIL 2026

Mishap data indicates need for training, mentorship and engagement

By Juan Aguilar

The naval enterprise recorded 32 motorcycle crashes in April, including three fatalities, occurring across the continental United States, Hawaii and Japan, with the highest concentrations reported in Virginia (28%) and California (25%). Most significantly, the data reflects a persistent trend; more than 72% of these crashes involved riders aged 29 and younger, particularly those in pay grades E-5 and below, continuing to highlight a critical at-risk demographic requiring continued command emphasis on mentorship, training and engagement.

This month's mishap data also reveals a continued pattern of preventable incidents across varying experience levels, locations and riding conditions, with recurring factors including loss of control during low-speed maneuvers, inadequate skill retention, hazardous roadway conditions and multi-vehicle interactions. Notably, several incidents involved riders who had completed the Basic Rider Course (BRC), reinforcing initial training

alone is not enough. Safe riding requires ongoing practice, active mentorship and sustained risk awareness.

Severe injuries, including fractures, internal trauma and life-threatening conditions, were present in multiple cases while other incidents resulted in minor injuries or property damage. The variety of mishap categories underscore the need for a comprehensive safety approach addressing both individual rider behavior and external hazards.

Mishap Overview

Between April 1-30, 32 motorcycle-related incidents were reported:

- **Multi-vehicle collisions:** 13
- **Collision with an animal or object:** 6
- **Loss of control/rollover:** 13

Key observations include:

- **Lane splitting and traffic interaction risks:** A rider collided with a vehicle while lane splitting on a public highway, emphasizing the

At a Glance

USN

Rider fatalities this report: 0
Rider fatalities for FY 26: 10

USMC

Rider fatalities this report: 3
Rider fatalities for FY 26: 8

Totals this report

Non-fatal crashes: 29
Fatalities: 3

hazards of reduced reaction time and limited escape routes.

- **Training with no license mishaps:** A severe injury occurred during low-speed practice for the BRC, demonstrating even controlled environments carry risk when fundamental skills are not yet developed.
- **Rear-end and hit-and-run incidents:** A rider without BRC training was rear-ended on a highway on-ramp, highlighting both vulnerability in traffic flow transitions and gaps in required training compliance.
- **Roadway hazards:** A pothole-induced crash at highway speed resulted in injury and extended limited duty, reinforcing the dangers of surface irregularities.
- **Severe multi-vehicle collision:** A head-on crash caused by an oncoming vehicle entering the wrong lane resulted in critical injuries, demonstrating the persistent risk posed by other drivers.
- **Appropriate stopping methods:** An untrained rider's instinct during a loss of control, especially at low speed, is to put a foot down to stop or catch the bike. While that may seem natural, it is ineffective and often makes the situation worse. In this case, the rider attempted to stop the falling motorcycle with their leg, resulting in the bike collapsing onto it and causing a fracture and subsequent limited light duty (LLD). You can't stop a motorcycle with your feet. Proper control and technique are the only ways to prevent falling.



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REGISTERED



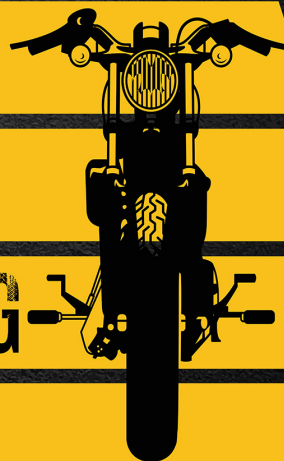
MOTORCYCLE

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Contributing factors, key takeaways for safe riding

(Editor's note: By analyzing the mishap reports, we're able to gain a more in-depth look at possible causes behind the write-ups, so we can find areas to work on to get real, get better. What follows are the key points that have been found and things to focus on.)

1. Training Gaps and Skill Retention

While several riders had completed the BRC, there was no evidence of follow-on training or sustained skill development. Riders demonstrated difficulty with lane changes, low-speed maneuvering and hazard response. One rider had not completed the BRC at all, indicating a breakdown in compliance and enforcement.

2. Loss of Control at Low Speed

Multiple incidents occurred at low speeds, including practice scenarios and routine riding. These events resulted in both minor and severe injuries, reinforcing foundational skills such as balance, throttle control and braking remain critical regardless of speed.

3. Multi-Vehicle Interaction Risks

Half of the incidents involved other vehicles, including lane-splitting collisions, rear-end

impacts and head-on crashes. These cases highlight the limited visibility of motorcycles and the need for heightened situational awareness, especially in congested or transitional traffic environments.

4. Environmental and Roadway Hazards

Surface hazards (such as potholes) contributed directly to a handful of crashes. Early-season riding conditions, including degraded road surfaces and inconsistent traction, continue to pose elevated risks.

5. Time-of-Day Considerations

Incidents occurred at all times of day. Reduced visibility, fatigue and traffic density variations likely contributed to risk exposure in these periods.

April's motorcycle mishaps highlight persistent, largely preventable risks. Completing initial training does not equal proficiency. Skills degrade without continued practice, and riders must pursue advanced training and mentorship. While other drivers and conditions play a role, most incidents stem from controllable factors such as training, awareness and decision-making.

Low-speed riding remains a frequent hazard due to weak fundamental skills.

Multi-vehicle environments require constant vigilance, as other drivers remain the primary threat. Defensive riding, proper lane positioning and maintaining escape routes are critical. Riders must also account for roadway hazards like potholes and debris, especially during seasonal transitions. A rider just starting out needs a higher level of compliance and command-level accountability.

Continuous skill development, disciplined riding and engaged leadership are essential to reversing these trends. For further "shake your head incidents," ensure to read the following to all your riders.

By the numbers

- 13 (41%) crashes involved colliding with a moving vehicle.
- 11 (34%) crashes involved a rollover/overturn.
- 6 (19%) crashes involved colliding with an animal or object
- 2 (6%) crashes had a rider who ran off the road.

By the clock

- Midnight - 3:59 a.m. – 2 (6%)
- 4 a.m.-7:59 a.m. – 6 (19%)
- 8 a.m. - 11:59 a.m. – 3 (9%)
- noon - 3:59 p.m. – 7 (22%)
- 4 p.m. - 7:59 p.m. – 10 (31%)
- 8 p.m. - 11:59 p.m. – 3 (10%)
- NR - 1 (3%)

By the day

- Weekdays – 17 (53%)
- Weekend – 15 (47%)



U.S. Marines with 3d Reconnaissance Battalion, prepare for the next iteration during the Basic Riders Course on Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, Japan, March 31, 2026. Basic Riders Course prepared the Marines in all things safe motorcycle handling to include starting and stopping drills, how to change gears, turning, and how to drive in different scenarios. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Briana Vera)

Rider Down

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

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.



Motorcycle Crash Legend

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

Fatal Crashes

April 17, 12:24 a.m., age NR, E-3

Location: Jacksonville, Florida

Remarks: Motorcycle rider collided with the rear of a semi-truck and sustained fatal injuries, pronounced deceased at the scene.

April 24, 4:28 p.m., age NR E-4

Location: Okinawa, Japan

Remarks: Rider was involved in a motorcycle collision with a taxi and sustained severe injuries. The rider was transported to a local hospital where they later succumbed to their injuries.

April 25, 5:08 p.m., 24-year-old E-5

Location: Benson, North Carolina

Remarks: Rider lost control while navigating a curve on a two-lane roadway and was ejected from the bike, resulting in fatal injuries. The rider was reportedly traveling with another motorcyclist at the time of the crash.

Nonfatal Crashes

April 2, 6:15 a.m., 20-year-old E-4

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle and collided with another vehicle while lane splitting on a public highway. BRC was completed in July 2025.

April 4, 2 p.m., 26-year-old E-4

Location: Virginia Beach, Virginia

Remarks: Rider lost control while practicing for their BRC at low speed, struck a curb and crashed, sustaining multiple fractures and injuries requiring hospitalization.

April 5, 12:07 p.m., 26-year-old E-6

Location: Aiea, Hawaii

Remarks: Rider was preparing to exit a highway when another vehicle unexpectedly changed lanes and cut into the rider's path. The rider swerved to avoid a collision, lost control and struck a concrete barrier before being thrown from the motorcycle.

April 5, 1:23 p.m., 33-year-old E-6

Location: Ayase City, Japan

Remarks: Rider was involved in a minor traffic incident when another vehicle backed into the stationary motorcycle in traffic.

April 6, 5:45 a.m., 20-year-old E-4

Location: Portsmouth, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was rear-ended by a sedan while driving on a highway on-ramp, totaling the motorcycle. The other vehicle fled the scene. The rider had not completed BRC.

April 6, 4:40 p.m., age NR E-4

Location: Schofield, Hawaii

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle at low speed and fell from the bike, resulting in minor injuries. The rider self-transported to a local hospital for evaluation and treatment. The rider completed BRC in January 2026.

April 9, 5:30 p.m., age NR E-7

Location: Suffolk, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle on a highway when abrupt braking by traffic ahead prompted hard braking, causing the rear tire to lock and the motorcycle to high side. The rider was separated from the motorcycle, struck the roadway and contacted the rear of a slowed vehicle.

April 9, 10 p.m., 23-year-old E-3

Location: Fort Worth, Texas

Remarks: Rider lost control when they overcorrected while attempting to avoid an approaching vehicle. The rider struck a curb and fell from an overpass approximately 15 feet, resulting in a period of unconsciousness. Emergency services transported the rider to a medical facility where they were treated for two fractured wrists and a fractured left ankle.

April 10, 6 a.m., 23-year-old E-5

Location: Coronado, California

Remarks: Rider was lane splitting when they struck the fender of a vehicle. The rider sustained a sprained left wrist and a forearm contusion and was placed on LLD for seven days.

April 10, 5:30 p.m., 22-year-old E-5

Location: Newport News, Virginia

Remarks: Rider lost control while changing lanes, laid the motorcycle down and collided with a vehicle ahead. The rider was transported by ambulance to a local medical center for evaluation and treatment. The rider completed BRC in June 2023.

Acronyms

***BRC:** Basic Rider Course

***EMS:** emergency medical service

***LLD:** light limited duty

***NR:** Not reported

CRASH REPORTS

April 10, 11 p.m., 37-year-old E-7

Location: Jacksonville, Florida

Remarks: Rider was involved in a head-on collision after an oncoming vehicle entered the wrong lane. The rider sustained severe injuries, including a broken pelvis, broken ribs, a ruptured spleen and brain bleed.

April 11, 12:30 p.m., 19-year-old E-2

Location: Sigonella, Italy

Remarks: Rider lost control of their motorcycle and crashed after hitting a pothole while traveling at 75 MPH. The rider was taken to the emergency room for treatment and received three days lost time and assigned to LLD for four weeks.

April 11, 6 p.m., 24-year-old E-5

Location: Pungo, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was negotiating a left-hand curve when the front wheel lost traction, causing the motorcycle to slide. The rider was thrown to the ground and sustained road rash while the motorcycle slid into a guardrail. Initial first aid was provided at the scene and the rider later reported for medical evaluation and was placed on LLD.

April 14, 4:45 p.m., age and rank NR

Location: Oceanside, California

Remarks: Rider lost control of their motorcycle and collided with a guardrail. The rider was hospitalized for injuries sustained in the crash.

April 15, 8:22 a.m., age and rank NR

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was lane-splitting on the highway when a vehicle braked abruptly and merged, blocking the rider's path. The rider initiated an evasive maneuver, clipped the vehicle and subsequently collided with a barrier. The rider sustained a wrist injury and was transported to a medical facility for evaluation.

April 16, 11:59 p.m., age NR, E-5

Location: Charlottesville, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was operating their motorcycle at an excessive speed and struck a stationary object, causing bodily injury and damage to public property. The rider was airlifted to a hospital for treatment and released within 24 hours.

April 17, 12:01 a.m., 28-year-old E-2

Location: Norfolk, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle on unfamiliar roads at night when they struck a pothole, resulting in a crash. The rider had consumed alcohol prior to riding and later regained consciousness at a hospital following medical treatment.

April 20, 7:30 a.m., 21-year-old E-4

Location: Kingsland, Georgia

Remarks: Rider attempted to avoid debris in the roadway, overcorrected and lost control, sending the motorcycle into a ditch. EMS transported the rider to a medical facility for evaluation and treatment. The rider sustained a concussion and multiple bruises, resulting in two lost workdays.

April 21, 6:40 a.m., 23-year-old E-5

Location: Norfolk, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle when a truck lost control after turning onto the roadway, crossed multiple lanes of traffic and collided with the rider. The impact ejected the rider over the median and across oncoming lanes.

April 22, 8 a.m., 27-year-old E-2

Location: Menefee, California

Remarks: Rider commuting to work crashed their motorcycle and sustained a broken tibia resulting in three lost workdays. BRC was completed in October 2025.

April 22, 9:40 a.m., 25-year-old E-5

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was involved in a collision with a pickup truck. The service member sustained minor injuries, resulting in two lost workdays.

April 22, time & age NR O-5

Location: Colorado Springs, Colorado

Remarks: Rider was involved in a single motorcycle mishap. The rider sustained a hairline fracture in the left ankle and deep lacerations to the left knee.

April 23, 3:12 p.m., age and rank NR

Location: California, Maryland

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle through an intersection when another vehicle entered without yielding, resulting in a collision. The rider attempted braking and evasive action but was unable to avoid impact and was thrown to the ground. The other vehicle fled the scene.

April 23, 7:45 p.m., 31-year-old E-2

Location: Ragged Point, California

Remarks: Rider entered a shadowed curve with gravel and rock debris, causing the motorcycle to lose traction. With limited options for recovery, the rider intentionally steered toward a cliff wall to avoid a more severe, off-road descent. The rider sustained minor injuries, received medical evaluation and returned to work the following day.



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CRASH REPORTS

April 24, 7 p.m., 19-year-old E-2

Location: Kingsland, Georgia

Remarks: Rider was entering a circular highway on-ramp when the motorcycle struck tire debris in the roadway, resulting in a loss of control. The rider separated from the motorcycle as it slid into a guardrail and sustained minor abrasions to the lower right calf.

April 25, 3 p.m., 24-year-old E-5

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was stopped at a traffic light and lost control of the motorcycle after accelerating to the speed limit when the light turned green. The rider sustained road rash to the left knee, left hip and both forearms resulting in five lost workdays.

April 26, 1 p.m., 26-year-old E-6

Location: Oahu, Hawaii

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle on an off-ramp when they

laid the bike down and struck a guardrail. The rider sustained bruising, abrasions and hematoma.

April 27, 6:30 p.m., 20-year-old E-4

Location: Wiggins, Mississippi

Remarks: Rider took a turn too wide, lost control on the shoulder of the roadway and was thrown from the motorcycle. The rider sustained a fractured femur, broken left arm and minor pelvic fractures.

April 30, 7 a.m., age NR, E-7

Location: Norfolk, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle on the interstate when a momentary lapse in attention prevented them from recognizing stopped traffic ahead. Unable to brake or maneuver in time, the rider collided with the stopped vehicle and was ejected onto the roadway.

USN AND USMC MOTORCYCLE CRASHES FY 2026 TO DATE

