

Seasonal Motorcycle Operations: Preparation, Maintenance, Risk Management is important

By Juan Aguilar

In February, the Naval Enterprise recorded 28 motorcycle crashes, with one resulting in a fatality. California continues to be a high-risk area, accounting for 14 reported crashes (48%) overall; Hawaii followed with six reported crashes equaling 12%. The remaining incidents occurred in various areas throughout the continental United States, as well as Italy and Spain.

The data reveals a persistent challenge with motorcycle/private motor vehicle (PMV-2/4) crashes with riders 29 and under, particularly those E-5 and below, accounting for over 79% of these incidents. Accurately reporting individuals' ages is essential for identifying at-risk demographics.

Operational Risk in Seasonal Changes

As we transition out of winter into spring,

Sailors and Marines must ensure they and their motorcycles are prepared for changing conditions. Cold mornings with warmer afternoons and seasonal fatigue (due to clocks changing time) increase risk, particularly when equipment or motorcyclist readiness is overlooked. Riders must account for these conditions by ensuring their motorcycle and personal readiness are appropriate before operating in whatever environment the weather throws at them.

Environmental Hazards and Riding Conditions

Environmental conditions reinforce the need for heightened preparation. Temperature fluctuations can create rapidly changing road conditions, including the formation of ice on bridges, overpasses and shaded areas. These hazards reduce traction and margin for error, underscoring the importance of conservative riding decisions and ensuring motorcycles are mechanically sound before each ride.

Lessons Learned

Editor's note: Following are the key points the Naval Safety Command needs command leadership, safety officers, supervisors and motorcycle safety representatives (MSR) to keep in mind when engaging with motorcycle riders around the naval enterprise.

Leadership and Mentorship

These are the cornerstones of creating a strong risk culture. Continued diligent oversight of training, licensing and mentorship is critical to our naval success. Leaders at all levels should ensure riders are not only trained but are encouraged to pursue advanced courses, remain licensed and practice defensive riding.

Ensure Accurate Rider Reporting

Accurate reporting and thorough investigation are the bedrock of our risk analysis and program effectiveness. Reporting the individuals' ages is essential for identifying at-risk demographics. To ensure safety data analysts have a clear picture of our rider population, the following actions are required:

Individual Rider Responsibility

All riders must log into the Risk Management Information (RMI) reporting system, accept the "Terms and Conditions" and verify their account information is up to date, specifically ensuring the question, "Is Motorcycle Rider?" field is set to "Yes." (If

At a Glance

USN

Rider fatalities this report: 0
Rider fatalities for FY 26: 8

USMC

Rider fatalities this report: 1
Rider fatalities for FY 26: 4

Totals this report

Non-fatal crashes: 27
Fatalities: 1

Cold Weather Impact on Motorcycle Systems

Motorcycle maintenance is more critical than ever following winter months, as cold temperatures have a significant impact on tire pressure, fluid levels and battery performance. Tire pressure tends to drop in colder weather and any reduced pressure can lead to decreased grip on slippery surfaces, increasing the likelihood of a loss of control.

Before each ride, it's essential to check tire pressure, ensuring it is in line with the manufacturer's recommendations. Additionally, inspecting the tire tread and using the appropriate weather grade oil are simple but effective ways to ensure the bike operates optimally.

When temperatures dip, motorcycle batteries can struggle to maintain their charge. Cold weather is notorious for draining battery life, and if a bike is left sitting for long periods without being ridden, it can be difficult to start when spring arrives.

A quick and easy tip to prevent battery issues is to remove the battery, clean and store it in a warmer, dry place. A thought for next winter's preparation is if you don't ride often during the winter, putting your bike on a trickle charger can keep the battery in optimal condition. This action can prevent the battery from becoming completely drained, making it easier to start your bike when the weather warms up again.

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Seasonal Motorcycle Operations

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Preventive Maintenance and Storage Practices

For those riders who didn't ride frequently during the winter, this is a great opportunity to perform proactive maintenance and prepare your bike for the upcoming spring riding season.

Ensure your bike is properly cleaned and waxed, as the salt from winter roads can damage both the paint and metal components. Check for any corrosion and remove any grime or salt buildup. Another key step is to change the oil if it hasn't been done recently, as winter riding conditions may have placed extra strain on the engine.

Inspect the brakes, chain and suspension to ensure everything is in good working order.

Whenever you plan on parking your motorcycle for several weeks or months, it's advisable to elevate the bike using a stand to keep the tires off the ground. This helps prevent flat spots from developing in the tires while the bike is stationary.

Remember to check your motorcycle's fluids. Cold temperatures can cause fluids to thicken, which may lead to engine problems if not addressed. Checking the oil, brake fluid, coolant levels and clutch fluid will ensure everything stays in optimal condition, even when you're not riding.

Risk-Based Decision Making and Readiness

Riding decisions, during winter or summer, should be driven by risk assessment and

equipment readiness. If road conditions or motorcycle conditions are not favorable, riders should delay operation until hazards are mitigated.

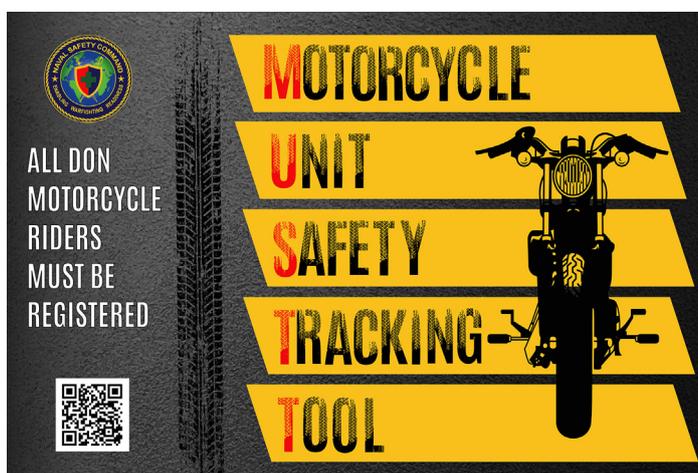
Proactive maintenance, proper storage and disciplined decision-making reduce the likelihood of preventable mishaps and support overall readiness. Exercising restraint when conditions are unsafe is a critical component of responsible winter motorcycle operations. Bottom Line: Motorcycle safety depends on preparation, maintenance and the discipline to ride only when conditions allow. Make the decision to ride a deliberate one.

Lessons Learned

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the "Is Motorcycle Rider?" field is set to "No," the individual will not populate on any motorcycle-related reports.)

• **MSR Action:** MSRs with the Motorcycle Unit Safety Tracking Tool (MUSTT) role are empowered to correct rider accounts on behalf of personnel. MSRs should regularly review rider data to ensure all riders are correctly captured in RMI for accurate training and compliance tracking by navigating to Admin > search accounts, locate the appropriate rider and update the account using the same criteria.



A Call to Action for Every Rider

Every detail matters in the pursuit of risk control. Do not ignore even minor factors, as this raises your risk and may result in a mishap. Based on preliminary reports, the following pages detail factors contributing to recent crashes, some of which are still under investigation.

When reviewing the crash narratives on the following pages, consider other factors that may have influenced the mishap. Remove one factor and the crash may not have occurred. Engage, reflect and ride safely.

By the numbers

- 14 (50%) crashes involved colliding with a moving vehicle.
- 8 (29%) crashes involved a rollover/overtake.
- 3 (11%) crashes involved colliding with an animal or object
- 2 (7%) crashes had a rider who ran off the road.
- 1 (3%) crash had no data provided.

By the clock

- Midnight - 3:59 a.m. – 1 (4%)
- 4 a.m.-7:59 a.m. – 7 (25%)
- 8 a.m. - 11:59 a.m. – 1 (4%)
- noon - 3:59 p.m. – 9 (32%)
- 4 p.m. - 7:59 p.m. – 7 (25%)
- 8 p.m. - 11:59 p.m. – 3 (10%)

By the day

- Weekdays – 18 (64%)
- Weekend – 10 (36%)



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.



Motorcycle Crash Legend

NR represents information not reported

Red entries represent

Marine Corps-specific mishaps
(all times local)

Fatal Crashes

Feb. 7, 12:40 p.m., 20-year-old E-4

Location: Fallbrook, California

Remarks: Two riders operating their motorcycles were involved in a collision with a passenger vehicle. One service member sustained fatal injuries and was transported to the hospital, where they later died from multiple blunt force injuries. The second rider sustained serious but non-life-threatening injuries. The mishap occurred while the riders were operating at a high rate of speed.

Nonfatal Crashes

Feb. 2, 5:30 a.m., 30-year-old E-4

Location: Rota, Spain

Remarks: Rider was operating a PMV-2 on an installation roadway while following a vehicle operated by a witness. While traveling, the motorcycle encountered a wet section of recently refurbished pavement. As the rider applied the brakes and maneuvered to avoid an obstacle near the edge of the roadway, the rider lost traction. The rider departed the roadway, struck a fixed object and was ejected, sliding about 20 feet along the roadway.

Feb. 3, 4:50 a.m., 21-year-old E-4

Location: Bremerton, Washington

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle and made a left turn when the rear wheel lost traction and slid. The motorcycle sustained minor scratches because of the incident. Rider was fit for duty following the mishap.

Feb. 3, 3 p.m., 23-year-old E-5

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle when it collided with a motor vehicle at an intersection. The motorcycle struck the vehicle, resulting in the rider sustaining a broken right wrist. EMS responded and the rider was transported to a medical facility for treatment. The rider received convalescent leave following care and treatment.

Feb. 4, 4 p.m., 23-year-old E-4

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was involved in a motorcycle crash and sustained non-life-threatening injuries, including a leg laceration. EMS transported the rider to hospital for evaluation and care. Rider was wearing all required PPE, which likely contributed to the limited severity of the injuries. Rider was compliant with the motorcycle safety program, including completion of BRC and ARC.

Feb. 4, 5:10 p.m., age and rank NR

Location: Norfolk, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was involved in a single motorcycle crash while departing an off-base residence. Rider encountered a patch of black ice during light rain while negotiating a turn, lost traction and intentionally laid the motorcycle down to prevent a more severe crash. The motorcycle sustained only cosmetic damage and no other vehicles, property damage, police or insurance involvement were reported. Rider sought medical evaluation the following morning, where X-rays confirmed a fractured ankle.

Feb. 4, 9:30 p.m., 21-year-old E-3

Location: Kapolei, Hawaii

Remarks: Rider was involved in a single-vehicle motorcycle crash. The rider was transported to the emergency room for evaluation and later discharged.

Feb. 5, 3:30 p.m., 20-year-old E-3

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was traveling on a major freeway while lane splitting between lanes when a vehicle ahead braked aggressively and swerved into the right lane. Rider applied aggressive braking and swerved left to avoid the vehicle. The maneuver resulted in the rider leaving the motorcycle and impacting the vehicle ahead. Although lane splitting may be legal in some jurisdictions, it carries increased risk due to reduced reaction time and limited space for evasive maneuvers. Further injury and damage details were not provided.

Feb. 6, 9:15 a.m., 28-year-old E-5

Location: Honolulu, Hawaii

Remarks: Rider was traveling westbound on a local highway when the vehicle ahead braked abruptly. Rider attempted to decelerate but was unable to avoid a collision and struck the rear of the vehicle, resulting in the rider being ejected over the vehicle and impacting the roadway. EMS transported the rider to a medical center, where the rider was admitted to the ICU and scheduled for surgery. Rider was wearing

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Acronyms

ARC: Advanced Rider Course

BRC: Basic Rider Course

EMS: Emergency Medical Service

ICU: Intensive Care Unit

LLD: light & limited duty

NR: No data or not reported

PPE: personal protective equipment

SIQ: sick in quarters

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required PPE, including a helmet, eye protection, boots and gloves, but was not wearing a protective motorcycle jacket at the time of the incident. Wearing a motorcycle jacket would have provided additional protection and improved rider visibility.

Feb. 8, 7:30 a.m., 20-year-old E-4

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider attempted to merge into the left lane and drove too close to the median, causing the motorcycle to collide with a guard rail. The rider was ejected from the motorcycle from the impact. Witnesses contacted EMS, who responded to the scene and confirmed the rider sustained multiple injuries. The rider was transported to a medical facility for further evaluation and treatment and was later transferred to the ICU for surgery. The rider completed BRC in September 2025.

Feb. 9, 1:30 p.m., 22-year-old E-4

Location: Pauma Valley, California

Remarks: Rider was traveling on a personal motorcycle through mountainous roadways. While attempting to pull onto the shoulder to allow another motorcycle to pass, the rider lost control of the front wheel and high-sided the motorcycle. The rider initially assessed personal condition and the motorcycle before continuing back to base and reporting the incident later. Medical evaluation determined a second-degree shoulder separation with possible ligament damage. The rider was placed on 30 days LLD.

Feb. 10, 7:15 a.m., age NR E-4

Location: Yuma, Arizona

Remarks: Two Marines were commuting for training onboard the installation when the mishap occurred. Marine #2 was stopped in traffic awaiting entry at the installation gate while operating a passenger vehicle. Marine #1, operating a motorcycle, approached the stopped traffic and struck the rear of Marine #2's vehicle. The impact ejected the rider from the motorcycle, leaving the rider unconscious at the scene. Emergency services responded and the rider was transported to an emergency department before being medically airlifted for a higher level of care.

Feb. 10, 2 p.m., age and rank NR

Location: NR

Remarks: Rider lost control under braking, causing the motorcycle to flip forward. The rider sustained fractures to both wrists and underwent surgery. Rider was placed in SIQ status while recovering.

Feb. 11, 7:30 a.m., age and rank NR

Location: Aiea, Hawaii

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle when a vehicle failed to stop at a stop sign and collided with the rider. Rider sustained bruises

and sprained wrist because of the incident. Rider was evaluated at hospital for care.

Feb. 11, 7 p.m., 22-year-old E-5

Location: Honolulu, Hawaii

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle when they were rear-ended by a passenger vehicle. The rider sustained an injured hand, a concussion and a fractured left clavicle because of the collision. The rider was transported to hospital for medical treatment. The rider completed ARC in June 2025.

Feb. 11, 9 p.m., 18-year-old E-3

Location: Gulfport, Mississippi

Remarks: Rider was involved in a motorcycle mishap and was transported to hospital for treatment. The rider was held overnight, underwent surgery the following day and was subsequently discharged. Use of any PPE is unknown. The rider held a valid motorcycle endorsement and alcohol or drugs were not factors in the incident.

Feb. 12, 12 p.m., 22-year-old E-2

Location: Jacksonville, Florida

Remarks: Rider was operating a personal motorcycle when an animal entered the roadway. The rider attempted to avoid the animal by laying the motorcycle down, resulting in minor injuries. The rider was transported to hospital for evaluation, where X-rays confirmed no fractures. The rider was discharged the same day with minor road rash and will follow up with a primary care provider as needed. Proper PPE was worn and there was no mission impact.

Feb. 12, 2:20 p.m., 21-year-old E-2

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was involved in a motorcycle crash at a four-way intersection in a local area. After proceeding through a green light from the front position in the lane, an oncoming vehicle turned sharply across solid lanes and struck the motorcycle with its front right bumper. The impact caused the rider to roll over the vehicle's hood and land on their feet. EMS transported the rider to a local medical center, where road rash was identified on the inner and outer thigh and lower leg; treatment included an ACE wrap, knee brace and 72-hour LLD.

Feb. 13, 6:45a.m., 26, year-old E-6

Location: Kaneohe, Hawaii

Remarks: Rider lost control and laid the motorcycle down, resulting in severe road rash. Emergency services transported the rider to the ER for treatment.



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Feb. 13, 6:45 p.m., 26-year-old E-4

Location: Malibu, California

Remarks: Rider operating their motorcycle, lost control and collided with the side of a mountain. The rider sustained multiple injuries, resulting in 43 days LLD and 15 lost workdays.

Feb. 14, 12 p.m., 36-year-old O-4

Location: Camp Pendleton, California

Remarks: Rider was involved in an accident while riding their motorcycle. The motorcycle sustained damage because of the incident. Rider sustained injuries requiring ground transport from the scene. Due to the severity of the injuries, rider was airlifted to hospital for surgical treatment.

Feb. 17, 1:30 p.m., 22-year-old E-5

Location: Wahiawa, Hawaii

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle while entering a highway on ramp when they lost traction in a curve and crashed. The rider was initially assessed at the scene and later sought medical care for wrist and neck pain. The rider was treated and released with 48-hour SIQ.

Feb. 20, 4:30 p.m., 23-year-old E-5

Location: Campo, California

Remarks: Rider was involved in a motorcycle mishap and sustained non-life-threatening injuries, including a leg laceration. EMS transported the rider to hospital, where they were admitted overnight for evaluation and treatment. The rider was fully compliant with required motorcycle safety training and PPE, including helmet, gloves, eye protection, boots and protective clothing. Follow-on care will be provided by the command's senior medical officer.

Feb. 20, 5 p.m., 28-year-old E-6

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was involved in a motorcycle crash on a highway while lane splitting. Another vehicle merged into the rider's path, resulting in a rear-end collision. The rider was ejected over the handlebars at high speed and sustained a fractured right wrist, multiple fractures to the left arm and wrist and numerous abrasions. The rider was transported to hospital for treatment.

Feb. 22, 7:30 p.m., 22-year-old E-3

Location: Thousand Oaks, California

Remarks: Rider operating a PMV-2 was struck from the rear by another vehicle. The rider sustained minor injuries, including bruising to the left leg and the motorcycle had minor damage. No limited duty or SIQ was required.

Feb. 22, 2 a.m., 24-year-old E-3

Location: Carinaro, Italy

Remarks: Rider operating a motorcycle collided with a parked vehicle. The rider sustained injuries to the face and wrist, including fractures and was transported to hospital. The rider remained hospitalized for more than two days for treatment and observation.

Feb. 23, 5:45 a.m., 26-year-old E-4

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was struck by a motor vehicle while trying to merge lanes. The rider was transported to hospital for left knee and ankle injuries.

Feb. 24, 22-year-old E-5

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider entered a northbound interstate from an on ramp when another vehicle merged into their lane, cutting them off. The rider braked abruptly, lost control and laid the motorcycle down before sliding into the rear of the vehicle. The rider sustained minor injuries, including road rash.

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.

Even though the following are not off-duty reportable PMV-2 events, it is worth referencing for training purposes.

Feb. 1, 22-year-old E-4 (Sports & Recreation)

Location: Yuma, Arizona

Remarks: Rider was operating a dirt bike on a trail park, when the rider's right leg became caught between the rear wheel and the frame. The entrapment caused the motorcycle to stop abruptly, resulting in fractures to the right tibia and fibula. Rider was transported for medical evaluation, where the injuries were confirmed. Surgery was required to treat the fractures.

Feb. 12, 9:30 a.m., 37-year-old E-7 (On-Duty)

Location: Coronado, California

Remarks: Rider was performing a quick stop maneuver during a motorcycle training course on the 30-mph portion of the second run when the front tire locked. To prevent the motorcycle from tipping over, the rider forcefully placed their left foot on the ground to stabilize the bike. The rider experienced mild pain but completed the course without further incident. Four days later, continued pain and swelling prompted evaluation at a naval medical facility. Medical assessment revealed no fractures; the rider was diagnosed with a foot contusion and issued a hard-sole shoe for one week.



USN AND USMC MOTORCYCLE CRASHES FY 2026 TO DATE

