

RIDER DOWN

JULY 2026

Every Mile Matters

Building Skill, Preventing Tragedy

By Juan Aguilar

The Naval Enterprise recorded 33 motorcycle crashes in July. While no fatalities occurred, several riders sustained life-altering injuries, including paralysis, traumatic brain injuries (TBI), amputations and severe orthopedic trauma. The incidents occurred across the continental United States, with the highest concentrations reported in Virginia (30%) and California (27%).

The data reflects a persistent trend: more than 76% of these crashes involved riders aged 29 and under, particularly in pay grades E-5 and below, continuing to highlight a critical at-risk demographic requiring continued command emphasis on mentorship, training and command engagement.

July's mishaps reflect recurring and largely preventable risk factors, including multi-vehicle interactions, loss of control during braking and cornering, roadway hazards, poor rider decision-making and inexperience. Several incidents involved riders who had just recently completed

the Basic Rider Course (BRC) before their crashes, reinforcing that initial training provides the foundation, but not the proficiency needed for safe motorcycle operation.

The number of serious injuries, including TBI, fractures, amputations and multiple hospitalizations, demonstrates motorcycle crashes do not have to be fatal to produce life-changing consequences. Continuous skill development, defensive riding, motorcycle readiness and command involvement remain essential to reducing risk.

Mishap Overview

In July, the following crashes were reported

- Multi-vehicle collisions: 16
- Collision with an animal or object: 2
- Loss of control/ rollover: 11
- No crash data reported: 4

Key observations

- Roadway hazard risks: Multiple riders lost control after encountering gravel, potholes and roadway objects that

At a Glance

USN

Rider fatalities this report: 0
Rider fatalities for FY 26: 15

USMC

Rider fatalities this report: 0
Rider fatalities for FY 26: 9

Totals this report

Non-fatal crashes: 33
Fatalities: 0

contributed to several loss-of-control crashes.

- New rider risk: Several riders had completed BRC only days or weeks before their crashes, while another incident involved a rider participating in Level II training.
- Multi-vehicle interactions: This remains a leading contributor, with numerous riders being struck, cut off, rear-ended or forced into emergency braking by other motorists.
- Low-speed crashes: Despite occurring at low speeds, these incidents resulted in severe injuries, including fractures requiring surgery and hospitalization.
- Severe injury trend: Riders sustained TBIs, cervical fractures, pelvic fractures, amputations, broken ankles, broken clavicles, fractured tibias and multiple orthopedic injuries requiring extended recovery.

Retired U.S. Navy Chief Warrant Officer 4 Greg Wojciechowski, a Motorcycle Safety Foundation rider coach, directs Sgt. Bryan McDougal, a supply quality assurance specialist for Blount Island Command, during a riding exercise in a Basic Rider Course June 25, 2026, at Marine Corps Support Facility Blount Island, Florida. The two-day course equipped novice riders with classroom instruction and hands-on training to develop rider proficiency and promote motorcycle safety. (Marine Corps photo by Dustin Senger)



Contributing factors, key takeaways for safe riding

(Editor's note: By analyzing the mishap reports, we gain a more in-depth look at possible causes behind the mishaps, so we identify areas to work on and Get Real, Get Better. The following are key points found and areas to focus on.)

1. Multi-Vehicle Interaction Risks:

Interactions with other vehicles remained the most significant threat during July. Numerous crashes involved drivers making unsafe lane changes, sudden stops, backing into motorcycles or otherwise failing to recognize the rider's presence. Riders must assume they are not seen and plan an escape route, whenever possible.

2. Loss of Control and Cornering Errors:

A large portion of the incidents involved riders losing control during braking, cornering, clutch engagement, obstacle avoidance and low-speed maneuvering. Many of these incidents occurred during routine riding conditions, reinforcing the importance of maintaining proficiency in braking, cornering and traction management.

3. Training Gaps and Skill Retention:

Several crashes demonstrated a gap between completing initial training and applying those skills in real-world riding conditions. Riders had trouble with cornering, braking, traction management and hazard response. Recent BRC

completion did not prevent multiple loss-of-control crashes, reinforcing that riding proficiency requires continual practice, mentorship and follow-on training.

4. Environmental and Roadway Hazards:

Loose gravel, roadway debris, potholes and changing road surfaces all contributed to crashes this month. Riders must continuously evaluate roadway conditions and adjust their speed and positioning accordingly.

5. Decision-Making and Motorcycle Readiness:

Several incidents highlight the importance of sound decision-making before and during each ride. Maintaining safe following distances, avoiding abrupt control inputs, ensuring motorcycle mechanical readiness and understanding personal skill limitations remain essential components of motorcycle safety. Riders should never attempt maintenance, troubleshooting or adjustments while riding. If a problem is identified during a ride, safely stop and address the issue before continuing.

This month's motorcycle crashes signify the greatest risks often arise during routine rides rather than extraordinary situations. While other motorists initiated several crashes, many incidents also involved controllable factors such as following distance, braking technique,

cornering proficiency, clutch control and rider decision-making.

The continued involvement of recently trained riders demonstrates that completing the BRC is only the beginning of rider development. Proficiency requires continual practice, mentorship and experience. Riders who routinely practice emergency braking, swerving, low-speed control and cornering techniques are better prepared to respond effectively when unexpected hazards arise.

To prevent future "shake your head incidents," motorcycle safety representatives and leadership are encouraged to share and discuss the following incidents with their riders.

By the numbers

- 16 (48%) crashes involved colliding with a moving vehicle.
- 7 (22%) crashes involved a rollover/overtake.
- 4 (12%) crashes running off the road.
- 2 (6%) crashes involved colliding with animal or object.
- 4 (12%) crash data NR.

By the clock

- Midnight - 3:59 a.m. – 1 (3%)
- 4 a.m.-7:59 a.m. – 1 (3%)
- 8 a.m. - 11:59 a.m. – 2 (6%)
- noon - 3:59 p.m. – 11 (34%)
- 4 p.m. - 7:59 p.m. – 6 (18%)
- 8 p.m. - 11:59 p.m. – 9 (27%)
- No Data - 3 (9%)

By the day

Weekdays – 20 (61%)
Weekend – 13 (39%)

Accountability: Not just while you're at work

By Dale A. Wisnieski, Safety and Occupational Health Manager
USMC Risk Management Directorate - Safety Division

(Editor's Note: This article came from a submission for the upcoming [Ground Warrior Magazine](#) Winter Edition. The message is very fitting for the Navy AND Marine Corps motorcycle communities. Read and heed.)

In the Marine Corps, accountability isn't a buzzword; it's the bedrock of trust between the Marine on your left and right. We are entrusted with immense responsibility, from the fire team to the Marine Expeditionary Force, and with that comes an absolute requirement for accountability, not just for our careers, but for the readiness of our unit and the welfare of our team.

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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

Rider Down

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.



Motorcycle Crash Legend

NR represents information not reported

Red entries represent

Marine Corps-specific mishaps
(all times local)

Nonfatal Crashes

July 1, 3 a.m., 30-year-old E-6

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider lost control after encountering loose gravel while exiting a highway off-ramp, causing them to lay the motorcycle down and slide along the roadway. The rider sustained minor injuries, received medical evaluation and was released with 48 hours of SIQ.

July 3, 11 a.m., age NR O-3

Location: Jacksonville, Florida

Remarks: Rider was in traffic when the vehicle ahead braked to a complete stop suddenly, leaving insufficient distance to avoid a collision. The rider suffered from a left shoulder dislocation and left pelvic fracture, resulting in 28 days convalescent leave.

July 4, 6:40 p.m., 26-year-old E-5

Location: Ayden, North Carolina

Remarks: Rider collided with a deer, sustaining multiple fractures to their arm. They were transported by ambulance to hospital and underwent surgery.

July 4, 10:10 p.m., 23-year-old E-4

Location: Pomona, California

Remarks: Rider lost control after striking an object or pothole while changing lanes to enter another highway and slid into the dirt shoulder. The rider was evaluated at a medical facility, released with diagnosed injuries and placed on seven days LLD.

July 4, 11:45 p.m., 27-year-old E-5

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was on a local interstate when a vehicle abruptly merged into the rider's lane, forcing emergency braking. The rear wheel locked, causing the rider to lose control and slide 30 to 40 yards across the roadway. The rider sustained road rash requiring medical treatment and was placed on 30 days light duty. The other vehicle fled the scene.

July 6, 11:20 a.m., age NR E-7

Location: Upper Marlboro, Maryland

Remarks: Rider was involved in an accident, sustaining multiple rib fractures, cervical fractures and TBI with a small brain bleed. The rider was hospitalized for treatment and observation.

July 6, 6 p.m., 29-year-old E-5

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was involved in a single-vehicle accident while operating another individual's motorcycle. The rider initially did not seek medical care but later reported soreness and was evaluated by medical staff. The rider completed BRC in June 2026 and was wearing full PPE at the time of the incident.

July 7, 1 p.m., 23-year-old E-5

Location: North Chicago, Illinois

Remarks: Rider was commuting home when a driver abruptly entered the rider's lane. The rider applied hard braking to avoid a collision and sustained road rash to the left hand. No SIQ or LLD was required.

July 8, 3:40 p.m., 22-year-old E-4

Location: Chesapeake, Virginia

Remarks: Rider had a vehicle abruptly change lanes into their path, resulting in a rear-end collision. The rider sustained a broken ankle, three broken ribs, a fractured clavicle, significant bruising and road rash. The rider required hospitalization and orthopedic surgery. The rider completed BRC in May 2026 and was wearing full PPE at the time of the crash.

July 9, 12:30 22-year-old E-5

Location: Chesapeake, Virginia

Remarks: Rider lost control while negotiating a turn during the ride home. The crash inflicted a case of road rash. The rider was placed on one day SIQ.

July 9, 1 p.m., 29-year-old E-3

Location: Coronado, California

Remarks: Rider was sideswiped while commuting from work by a vehicle changing lanes. The rider remained upright, pursued the driver to exchange information and sought medical evaluation the following day. The rider was placed on seven days LLD.

Acronyms

*ARC: Advanced Rider Course

*BRC: Basic Rider Course

*ERC: Experienced Rider Course

*LLD: light limited duty

*NR: not reported

*PMV-2: motorcycle

*PPE: personal protection equipment

*SIQ: sick in quarters

*TBI: Traumatic Brain Injury

July 10, time NR, 33-year-old E-3

Location: Deerfield, Massachusetts

Remarks: Rider was involved in a collision with a passenger vehicle. The rider had their foot amputated, as well as a fractured knee and significant dental injuries requiring hospitalization and surgical treatment.

July 13, 12 p.m., 19-year-old E-3

Location: Norfolk, Virginia

Remarks: Rider crashed, sustaining a case of road rash and a hip injury. They were transported to a medical facility for evaluation and treatment. They completed BRC in May 2026.

July 14, 12:30 p.m., 30-year-old E-5

Location: North Chicago, Illinois

Remarks: Rider was leaving work when another vehicle backed into their motorcycle in a parking lot, pinning the rider's right leg between the two vehicles. The rider sought medical evaluation the following day after developing pain and received X-rays and medication. The rider was placed on 72 hours SIQ pending follow-up evaluation.

July 14, 4 p.m., age and rank NR

Location: Portsmouth, Virginia

Remarks: Rider collided with a four-door sedan, sustaining minor injuries, including right leg pain.

July 15, time NR, 21-year-old E-4

Location: Fort Worth, Texas

Remarks: Rider collided with a passenger vehicle, sustaining a severe spinal injury resulting in paralysis and required hospitalization.

July 16, 6:30 p.m., 39-year-old E-6

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider lost balance while pulling out of a parking lot after the rider's foot slipped during clutch engagement, causing the motorcycle to tip over onto the rider's leg. The rider sustained a fractured tibia requiring surgery.

July 16, 9 p.m., 21-year-old E-4

Location: Chesapeake, Virginia

Remarks: Rider collided with a vehicle off base. The rider was transported to an emergency room before being transferred to a military medical facility for further treatment. The rider had completed BRC just two days before the crash.

July 16, 10 p.m., 28-year-old E-5

Location: Virginia Beach, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was the victim of a hit-and-run, sustaining road

rash, a bruised lung and memory loss and was transported to hospital for treatment.

July 17, 2:30 p.m., 19-year-old E-2

Location: Gainesville, Florida

Remarks: Rider rear-ended a minivan, sustaining fractures to the nose and both knees. They were transported for medical evaluation and treatment. The rider had completed BRC.

July 18, 9:15 p.m., age NR E-3

Location: Rancho Santa Margarita, California

Remarks: Rider collided with a passenger vehicle after failing to maintain lane control. The rider sustained an ankle injury and was placed on seven days SIQ.

July 19, 1:50 p.m., 23-year-old E-3

Location: Baltimore, Maryland

Remarks: Rider crashed, striking the rear of a vehicle during a sudden traffic stop. The rider sustained minor bruises and abrasions and was treated at hospital and released.

July 20, 8:17 p.m., 33-year-old E-7

Location: Jacksonville, Florida

Remarks: Rider crashed and was transported by ambulance to hospital for evaluation and treatment. The rider completed ARC in May 2024 and was wearing all required PPE at the time of the incident.

July 21, 7 p.m., age NR E-5

Location: Fallon, Nevada

Remarks: Rider collided with a moving vehicle, sustaining a concussion and minor abrasions. They were evaluated in the emergency room and released.

July 21, 8:25 p.m., age NR E-7

Location: National City, California

Remarks: Rider was involved in an accident while commuting to work. They were transported by emergency medical services to hospital, where the rider was diagnosed with a fractured tibia requiring two surgeries.

July 23, 5:40 a.m., 26-year-old E-4

Location: Fallbrook, California

Remarks: Rider collided with a work van while lane splitting through traffic. The rider sustained a fractured right ankle and was transported to a military medical facility for evaluation and treatment.



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July 25, 12 p.m., 25-year-old E-5

Location: Portsmouth, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was involved in a hit-and-run collision with another motorcycle while traveling through a tunnel. The rider was transported to the hospital for medical evaluation and treatment. The rider completed ARC in August 2022.

July 25, 1:20 p.m., 22-year-old E-3

Location: Alexandria, Virginia

Remarks: Rider lost control after encountering loose gravel on the roadway. The rider sustained a fractured left thumb and road rash to the right elbow.

July 25, 3:30 p.m., 21-year-old E-4

Location: Kapolei, Hawaii

Remarks: Rider was in a single-vehicle motorcycle incident and sought medical evaluation at the hospital. The rider was treated and released, initially placed on SIQ and later reevaluated before being placed on convalescent leave. The rider completed ARC in May 2026.

July 25, 7 p.m., 20-year-old E-3

Location: Jacksonville, Florida

Remarks: Rider was involved in a crash at an intersection and received medical evaluation and treatment at the hospital. The rider was wearing all required PPE, held a valid motorcycle endorsement and completed BRC in September 2025.

July 26, 11:24 p.m., 22-year-old E-4

Location: Norfolk, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was forced off the roadway by a vehicle crossing into the rider's lane. The rider was transported to the hospital for evaluation and treated for road rash to the right arm and leg. The rider completed ARC in May 2026.

July 28, time and age NR CW0-3

Location: San Antonio, Texas

Remarks: Rider crashed after striking the rear of a vehicle and was ejected from the motorcycle. The rider was transported by ambulance to hospital and treated for chest abrasions and liver laceration. The rider had completed the ARC and ERC.

July 30, 9:15 p.m., age NR E-4

Location: Norfolk, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was commuting home when a vehicle ahead stopped abruptly. The rider took evasive action to avoid a collision, sustaining a broken left thumb.

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

July 9, 1:10 p.m., 27-year-old E-3

Location: Bridgeport, California

Remarks: Rider was attending Motorcycle Level II training, during the lunch break was independently practicing cornering when the motorcycle struck a crack in the road surface and lost traction. The motorcycle tipped over and slid, resulting in the rider receiving a fractured left wrist and abrasions to the left knee. The rider was placed on 31 days LLD.

July 13, 11:35 p.m., 19-year-old, 21-year-old, 22-year-old E-1, E-2, E-3, respectively.

Location: Fernandina Beach, Florida

Remarks: Three riders attempted to evade law enforcement while traveling at speeds exceeding 100 mph. The incident ended without injury, but it serves as a reminder excessive speed and reckless decision-making dramatically increase the likelihood of a fatal motorcycle crash.

Accountability

(Continued from page 2)

This ethos doesn't stop at the end of the workday. The professional discipline ensuring a helicopter is safe to fly, or a vehicle is ready to roll, is the same discipline required to manage risk off duty. A single missed step during maintenance can sideline a critical asset and impact mission readiness. In the same way, a poor decision made off duty can remove a vital member from a team depending on them. The consequences of decisions, good or bad, are the primary drivers of success or failure.

Nowhere is this truer than with motorcycle riding, an activity that remains a top safety challenge for Marines. Policies governing riding, from mandatory training and use of personal protective equipment to mentorship programs, are not in place to restrict freedom. They are safety mechanisms forged from the hard-learned lessons of those who came before us, designed to keep our riders safely in formation.

A common sentiment among riders is, "It's my life and I'm only hurting myself." While understandable from an individual's point of view, this perspective overlooks the truth of our profession: our individual readiness is a team asset. Our

knowledge, skills and presence are all counted on by fellow Marines. A bad decision, like riding under the influence or forgoing a helmet, doesn't just endanger one person; it has the potential to remove a leader, a mentor, a friend from the lives of their family and from the ranks of their unit.

Accountability is a team sport. It demands not only personal discipline but also the courage to hold our fellow Marines to the same standard. Intervening when a fellow Marine disregards policy or makes a dangerous choice is never easy. But it will never be as difficult as attending the funeral of a Marine you could have helped. In our Corps, any Marine has the authority and the obligation to step in and save a life.

Ultimately, a culture of accountability is what strengthens a safety program and, more importantly, begins to change the very behaviors that lead to preventable mishaps.

If you would like additional information on improving your unit's motorcycle safety program, contact your unit motorcycle safety representative. Ride safe!



USN AND USMC MOTORCYCLE CRASHES FY 2026 TO DATE

