

RIDER DOWN

MARCH 2026

Spring is here Keep an eye out for blooming motorcycles

By Juan Aguilar

The arrival of the spring riding season presents opportunities and significant risks for motorcyclists throughout the Navy and Marine Corps. While warmer temperatures encourage more riders onto the roads, this increased traffic compounds the dangers posed by changing road conditions and requires heightened situational awareness from every service member. Before we dive further into springtime riding tips, let's look at last month's motorcycle riding stats.

In March, the naval enterprise recorded 41 motorcycle crashes, three of which were fatal. A review of these incidents indicates while they occurred across the continental United States, Hawaii and Japan, a high concentration was identified in California (34%) and Virginia (29%). Most significantly,

the data reflected a persistent trend: over 63% of these crashes involved riders aged 29 and under, particularly those in pay grades E-5 and below.

This statistic underscores a critical at-risk demographic requiring ongoing focus on safety engagement and mentorship across the enterprise.

With spring underway, let's look at how we can mitigate risks. Riders must adopt a proactive safety posture focusing on three key areas: environmental awareness, personal readiness and defensive operations.

Environmental Awareness: Riders must be vigilant of hazardous road conditions common in spring. These include degraded surfaces like potholes from winter weather and traction-reducing debris such as sand,

At a Glance

USN
Rider fatalities this report: 2
Rider fatalities for FY 26: 10

USMC
Rider fatalities this report: 1
Rider fatalities for FY 26: 5

Totals this report
Non-fatal crashes: 38
Fatalities: 3

gravel and wet leaves. Combined with reduced tire grip from rain, these factors demand increased following distances and adjusted speeds. Furthermore, increased traffic volume and diminished motorist awareness of motorcycles elevate the risk at intersections and merging lanes.

Personal Readiness: Safe operation depends entirely on a rider's preparedness. This requires a thorough inspection of all personal protective equipment for serviceability and a comprehensive pre-ride check of the motorcycle to prevent mechanical failure. Crucially, riders must also address skill degradation after a period of inactivity; refresher training is strongly recommended to reacclimate to dynamic road conditions.

Defensive Operations: A defensive mindset is paramount. Riders must maximize their visibility through high-conspicuity gear and constant headlight use, particularly in adverse weather. Clear communication through proper signaling and predictable vehicle maneuvers is equally vital to prevent misunderstandings with other motorists and mitigate risk.

Safe riding this spring requires a disciplined and holistic mindset. By respecting increased traffic density, accounting for seasonal hazards and committing to personal and mechanical readiness, riders can successfully navigate the season. Every service member must remain alert, exercise sound judgment and always be prepared to respond to unexpected events on the road.

Lessons Learned

To all command leadership, safety officers, supervisors and motorcycle safety representatives (MSR): The following key points are essential for our engagement with every motorcycle rider across the naval enterprise. Our mission is to reinforce a culture of risk management and prevent mishaps through proactive measures.

Training: A Continuous Journey, not a Destination

The fact riders can experience fatal mishaps within a week of completing the Basic Rider Course (BRC) is a stark reminder initial training is only the beginning. Without consistent reinforcement, skills degrade and poor judgment increases.

- Go Beyond the Basics: Initial training

must be supplemented with ongoing mentorship and supervised riding.

- Sustain Proficiency: Encourage gradual exposure to more complex riding environments to build and sustain skills.

- Never Stop Learning: Promote the pursuit of advanced courses to master defensive riding and hazard awareness.

Leadership and Mentorship: The Core of Our Safety Culture

Your diligent oversight of training, licensing and mentorship is fundamental to our success and the well-being of our Sailors and Marines.

- Active Engagement: Leaders at all levels

(Continued on page 2)

must ensure riders are not just trained but are consistently encouraged and mentored.

- Uphold the Standard: Verify all riders in your command remain properly licensed and regularly practice defensive riding techniques.
- Foster Excellence: Create an environment where continuous improvement and advanced training are the norms for every rider.

Accurate Reporting: The Key to Effective Risk Management

Thorough and accurate data is the bedrock of our risk analysis. To effectively identify at-risk demographics and tailor our safety programs, we must have a clear picture of our rider population.

Individual Rider Responsibility

- Log into the Risk Management Information (RMI) system.
- Accept the "Terms and Conditions."
- Verify your account information is current, ensure the "Is Motorcycle Rider?" field is set to "Yes." Setting this field to "No" will exclude you from critical motorcycle safety reports and undermines the unit's oversight of its riders.

Motorcycle Safety Representative Actions:

- MSRs with the Motorcycle Unit Safety Tracking Tool (MUSTT) role should regularly audit rider data.
- Correct rider accounts on their behalf by navigating to Admin > Search Accounts to ensure all riders are accurately captured for

compliance and training tracking.

- Check out the Motorcycle Safety Foundation Rider Mentor Guide which is available to Navy riders on the NAVSAFECOM CAC-enabled site.

A Call to Action for Every Rider

Every detail matters in the world of motorcycling. A minor oversight can elevate your risk and lead to mishaps. As you review crash data, think critically about the contributing factors. Often, removing just one of those factors could have prevented the incident entirely.

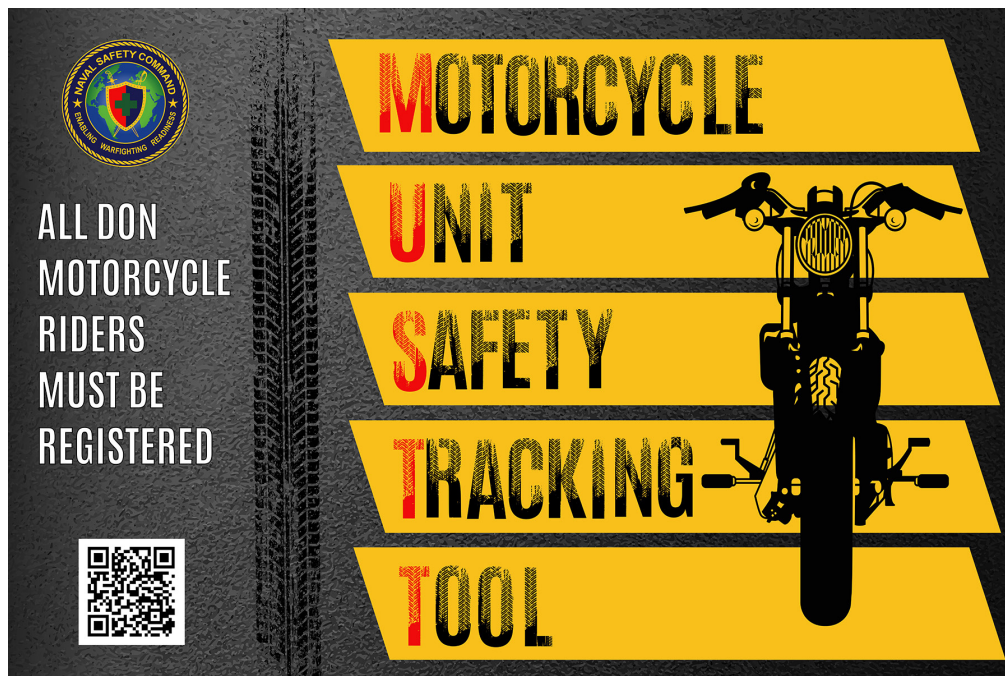
Engage with your peers, reflect on your habits and always ride safely.

Rider Down reports: Important tools to have

Incorporate the Rider Down reports into your safety and training briefs. These indispensable tools provide detailed insights into crash factors, enabling you to formulate effective preventive measures.

We encourage all MSRs, riders and safety professionals to subscribe and use this resource to enhance our safety culture. Access the latest motorcycle risk analysis from the Naval Safety Command by logging into RMI with just a few clicks:

Log in to RMI → Click "Pubs and Refs" (Left Menu) → Select "Motorcycle Rubber Side Down" Here you can view the library of reports and subscribe to receive new editions as they are released.



By the numbers

- 23 (56%) crashes involved colliding with a moving vehicle.
- 13 (32%) crashes involved a rollover/overturn.
- 4 (10%) crashes involved colliding with an animal or object
- 1 (2%) crash had a rider who ran off the road.

By the clock

- Midnight - 3:59 a.m. – 1 (3%)
- 4 a.m.-7:59 a.m. – 5 (12%)
- 8 a.m. - 11:59 a.m. – 4 (10%)
- noon - 3:59 p.m. – 10 (24%)
- 4 p.m. - 7:59 p.m. – 12 (29%)
- 8 p.m. - 11:59 p.m. – 6 (15%)
- NR - 3 (7%)

By the day

- Weekdays – 20 (49%)
- Weekend – 21 (51%)



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

March 7, 11:35 p.m., 27-year-old E-5

Location: Norfolk, Virginia

Remarks: Rider operating a motorcycle was involved in a late-night traffic collision at an intersection with another vehicle. Speed was a contributing factor in the crash.

March 19, 4:31 p.m., 18-year-old E-2

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was lane splitting on a highway when they collided with a slow-moving vehicle. The impact ejected the rider from the motorcycle.

March 27, 1:30 a.m., 20-year-old E-3

Location: Chula Vista, California

Remarks: Rider struck another vehicle and ejected from the motorcycle. The rider's completion of BRC just one-week prior underscores the importance of continued mentorship, supervised riding and gradual exposure to complex riding conditions following initial training.

Nonfatal Crashes

March 1, 12:20 p.m., 23-year-old E-4

Location: Havelock, North Carolina

Remarks: Rider riding with a group attempted to stop at a traffic light. The rider locked the rear brake, lost control and dropped the motorcycle, which fell onto the rider's right foot.

March 2, 8:30 p.m., 27-year-old E-6

Location: Jacksonville, Florida

Remarks: Rider was involved in a hit-and-run while operating a motorcycle.

March 3, 6:45 p.m., 27-year-old E-5

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was merging onto a highway on ramp at low speed when the vehicle ahead came to a complete stop. The rider was checking over their shoulder for oncoming traffic, did not anticipate the stopped vehicle and rear-ended the left rear bumper. The crash resulted in a broken collarbone.

March 4, 7:45 a.m., 21-year-old E-4

Location: Norfolk, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was commuting to work when a vehicle in front of them braked. The rider attempted to swerve to avoid a collision, lost balance and laid the motorcycle down, sustaining minor bruises and pain.

March 5, 8:15 a.m., age NR, E-5

Location: Virginia Beach, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was involved in a motorcycle collision after a vehicle failed to yield at a stop sign and pulled into the rider's path. The rider was diagnosed with a closed head injury.

March 5, 7:30 p.m., 22-year-old E-5

Location: San Antonio, Texas

Remarks: Rider struck a stray animal that entered the roadway, resulting in a loss of control. The rider was treated for minor injuries.

March 6, 3:35 p.m., 26-year-old O-3

Location: Okinawa, Japan

Remarks: Rider attempted to avoid a vehicle that appeared to be changing lanes. When the vehicle unexpectedly moved back into its original lane, the motorcycle struck it from behind. The rider was thrown from the bike and diagnosed with a knee injury.

March 7, time, age, grade NR

Location: Middleburg, Florida

Remarks: As the rider was pulling onto the roadway from a stop sign, they were struck by a vehicle.

March 7, 8 p.m., 29-year-old E-6

Location: Virginia Beach, Virginia

Remarks: Rider lost traction after encountering gravel while exiting a highway and slid onto the roadway. The rider was treated for road rash.

March 10, 8:30 a.m., 28-year-old E-6

Location: Gulfport, Mississippi

Remarks: Rider collided with a vehicle that failed to stop at an intersection. The rider sustained a broken fibula and thumb.

Acronyms

***BRC:** Basic Rider Course

***NR:** Not reported

***PPE:** personal protective equipment

***SUV:** sport utility vehicle

March 10, 4:58 p.m., 36-year-old E-6

Location: Imperial Beach, California

Remarks: Rider was struck by a vehicle merging into their lane of travel. The subsequent impact caused the rider to hit a curb and lose control of the motorcycle, resulting in a fractured left elbow and multiple contusions.

March 11, 2:45 p.m., 20-year-old E-1

Location: Jacksonville, Florida

Remarks: Rider was cut off by another driver, causing the rider to swerve and fall from the motorcycle, sustaining minor injuries.

March 12, 9:20 a.m., 33-year-old E-5

Location: Coronado, California

Remarks: Rider was forced to lay the motorcycle down to avoid a collision when a truck executed an illegal turn from an adjacent lane, crossing directly into the rider's path. The evasive maneuver resulted in minor soreness to the rider's left wrist.

March 14, 11:23 p.m., 25-year-old E-5

Location: Las Vegas, Nevada

Remarks: Rider was traveling at high speed when they rear-ended a slow-moving vehicle while exiting the highway. The rider sustained a fractured right femur, a broken finger and multiple abrasions and was airlifted to a hospital.

March 15, 12:53 p.m., 23-year-old E-5

Location: Suffolk, Virginia

Remarks: Rider lost control of a motorcycle and impacted a guardrail. The rider sustained significant injuries.

March 15, 3 p.m., 33-year-old O-3

Location: Honolulu, Hawaii

Remarks: Rider lost control of a motorcycle after encountering gravel on an exit ramp. The rider sustained a broken left elbow.

March 15, 5 p.m., 25-year-old E-5

Location: Newport News, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was struck by a vehicle and sustained minor injuries.

March 15, 5:15 p.m., 19-year-old E-1

Location: Jacksonville, Florida

Remarks: Rider lost control when the motorcycle's handlebars locked, causing the rider to strike a curb and fall to the ground. The rider sustained minor scrapes and bumps. The rider had recently purchased the motorcycle and had not yet attended the scheduled motorcycle safety course.

March 17, time NR, 22-year-old E-4

Location: Newport News, Virginia

Remarks: The rider's motorcycle was struck by a vehicle that crossed multiple lanes. The rider did not sustain any significant injuries.

March 17, 6:45 a.m., 26-year-old E-3

Location: Long Beach, California

Remarks: While on their commute, the rider was struck and sustained a broken pelvis and ankle, requiring hospitalization and surgery.

March 17, 7 a.m., 28-year-old E-5

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was lane-splitting when another vehicle merged across lanes, resulting in a collision. The rider sustained minor injuries.

March 17, 1 p.m., 20-year-old E-2

Location: Norfolk, Virginia

Remarks: Rider rear-ended a vehicle resulting in a crash. The rider sustained multiple injuries.

March 18, 6:30 a.m., 24-year-old E-5

Location: Bonita, California

Remarks: Rider attempted to pass a vehicle and was struck during the maneuver. The rider sustained an ankle injury.

March 19, 5:35 p.m., 21-year-old E-4

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was traveling on a highway while lane splitting through slowed traffic when a pickup truck abruptly changed lanes into the rider's path. The rider attempted to brake and evade but collided with the vehicle and was thrown from the motorcycle. The rider was diagnosed with a fractured fifth metacarpal.

March 22, 4:53 p.m., 20-year-old E-3

Location: Virginia Beach, Virginia

Remarks: Rider collided with a vehicle making an unprotected left turn at an intersection. The rider sustained critical injuries and was transported to hospital and placed in a medically induced coma. The rider completed BRC March 6.

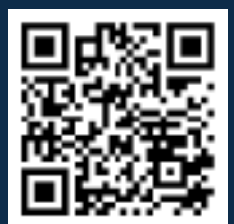
March 22, 5 p.m., 27-year-old E-6

Location: Columbia, Maryland

Remarks: Rider struck a guard rail resulting in a neck laceration and a fractured jaw.



ENABLING WARFIGHTING READINESS
375 A Street, Norfolk, VA 23511-4399
navalsafetycommand.navy.mil



March 22, 5:30 p.m., age and grade NR

Location: Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri

Remarks: Rider lost control of their motorcycle, resulting in a crash. The rider sustained a fractured tibia.

March 22, 5:30 p.m., age NR E-4

Location: Attalla, Alabama

Remarks: Rider was involved in a collision with a motor vehicle, resulting in injuries requiring hospitalization.

March 25, 12 p.m., age and rank NR

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider lost traction while operating a motorcycle and dropped the bike. The rider sustained minor scrapes to the left leg.

March 26, 8:30 p.m., 25-year-old E-6

Location: Norfolk, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle through a tunnel when they struck a pothole, causing a loss of control and subsequent crash. A second rider traveling behind was unable to avoid the fallen rider and made contact. The rider was transported to an emergency department.

March 26, 11:28 p.m., 33-year-old E-6

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was traveling southbound on a roadway and was in a crash. Rider was admitted to hospital.

March 27, 5 a.m., 27-year-old E-5

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was en route to work and crashed when another vehicle failed to signal when changing lanes. Rider sustained minor head injury.

March 27, 1:30 p.m., 29-year-old E-6

Location: Norfolk, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was obeying the speed limit when a vehicle ahead stopped abruptly. The rider applied aggressive braking, resulting in a loss of control and being thrown over the motorcycle. The rider sustained a fractured shoulder blade.

March 27, time and age NR, E-3

Location: Jacksonville, North Carolina

Remarks: Rider was in a crash and sustained multiple injuries, including loss of a limb.

March 28, 10:22 a.m., age NR, E-3

Location: Yuma, Arizona

Remarks: Rider was maneuvering a motorcycle at low speed in a gravel parking lot when loss of traction resulted in losing control and the motorcycle being laid down. The motorcycle fell onto the rider's leg, injuring it.

March 28, 12:52 p.m., 29-year-old E-6

Location: Portsmouth, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was involved in a collision with an SUV. The rider sustained multiple fractures.

March 29, 4:30 p.m., 35-year-old E-7

Location: Ridgecrest, California

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle on a dirt road when uneven, sandy terrain caused a loss of control. The rider sustained multiple wrist fractures.

March 30, 2:30 p.m., 27-year-old E-3

Location: NAB Coronado, California

Remarks: Rider was making a left turn at an intersection when they were struck by an oncoming vehicle traveling at high speed. The rider sustained injuries requiring surgery on the right leg and ankle.

Even though the following are on-duty training mishaps and not off-duty motorcycle events, they are worth referencing for training purposes.

March 14, 11:45 a.m., age NR E-5

Location: Rancho Mission Viejo, California

Remarks: Rider was participating in Level III motorcycle training. During a braking maneuver, the rider applied throttle, resulting in a loss of control. The rider sustained fractures on both wrists.

March 17, 12 p.m., 31-year-old O-3

Location: Coronado, California

Remarks: Rider was participating in BRC when they lost control during a low-speed turning exercise and fell to the ground. The motorcycle landed on the rider's shoulder, resulting in a fractured clavicle.

March 27, 10:20 a.m., 25-year-old E-5

Location: Newport, North Carolina

Remarks: During a Motorcycle Mentorship Program group ride, riders conducted pre-ride safety briefs, PPE checks and motorcycle inspections before departure. While navigating a series of curves, one rider failed to maintain proper spacing, panic braked and lost control, resulting in a low-side crash. A rider following closely attempted evasive action but also lost control and crashed. Both riders sustained minor injuries.

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. Motorcycling already carries inherent risks and reckless actions only compound this danger.



USN AND USMC MOTORCYCLE CRASHES FY 2026 TO DATE



As of 31 March 2026

NON-FATAL CRASHES

FATAL CRASHES