



NAVAL SAFETY COMMAND SAFETY AWARENESS DISPATCH



Pedestrian Safety

"Look both ways or you might end up looking at the sky." —Probably your mom (and she was right)



Walking might seem like the safest way to get from point A to point B but sometimes it isn't. When roads, highways and crosswalks are involved, the simple act of walking becomes a lot more dangerous. Whether crossing at a green light, assisting a stranded vehicle or walking along a shoulder, pedestrians are at constant risk when sharing space with traffic. All it takes is one distracted driver, one missed signal or one bad assumption to turn a routine moment into a life-changing incident. If you're the pedestrian, your life is in your own hands. Have a healthy fear that drivers won't do what you expect; stay aware and make cautious decisions with that in mind. Here are some real-life examples where pedestrians were injured (or

worse). Please read and remember the next time you're out there on foot.

- **Green Light, Red Flag.** A walking Sailor was doing *almost* everything right when he stopped at the crosswalk just outside the base. He made sure the signal said "walk" and only then stepped into the street (*almost "mom-approved" behavior; what did he miss?*). Even with a green light, danger had other plans. As he crossed, something in his peripheral vision caught his attention, a car. Before he could react or get out of the way, it struck him. The impact knocked him to the ground, leaving him with cuts, bruises, and fourteen days of lost work. —*A green light means go, but it doesn't mean safe. You've got to look both ways. Crosswalks and signals help guide traffic, but they're not forcefields. Drivers get distracted. They miss lights. They don't see you. Just like when you were a kid, look both ways and make eye contact with drivers when possible. That extra second of caution can save you from a world of hurt.*

- **Trust but Verify.** It was around 2200 (*so it was dark*) when a Sailor stepped into a crosswalk at an intersection, following all the rules. The pedestrian signal was green. He had the right of way. Nothing seemed out of place... until a car made a slow right turn at the red light and the driver didn't see him in time. The car struck the Sailor at just five miles per hour, but it was enough to knock him down hard. He was taken to the ER and diagnosed with bruises including to his tailbone, lower back, and shoulder. Luckily, nothing was broken but he didn't walk away unscathed. —*This is another classic case of following the rules and still getting hurt. A green "walk" signal means you're allowed to cross, not necessarily that it's safe to do so. Drivers turning right on red may be focused on other cars, not looking for pedestrians. Just because you're visible doesn't mean you're seen – and in the dark, you might not be as visible as you think. Before you step off the curb, make eye contact, pause for that extra beat, and verify that traffic has truly stopped. As you cross, Keep Looking for cars! Green means go, but only when it's clear to do so.*

- **Wrong Place, Wrong Time.** A Sailor had just parked along a neighborhood street, nothing unusual. After stepping out of the vehicle, he leaned back inside to grab a few belongings before heading inside. That's when everything changed. An SUV came down the road and didn't strike the car, but it *did* strike him. The Sailor was caught on the truck's step rail and dragged roughly 100 feet before being released. The SUV didn't stop. No brakes. No honk. No apology, just gone. —*You may be parked, but that doesn't mean traffic around you hits pause. Turning your back on moving cars—especially when you're half in, half out of a vehicle—is a dangerous gamble. Always assume the other drivers are distracted, rushing, or just not paying attention. Stay alert, stay visible, and treat the road like a live hazard zone... because it is.*

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- **Good Intentions, Bad Timing.** It was 0300 when a Sailor and her passenger exited the interstate. They spotted a disabled vehicle stranded in the middle of the off-ramp and did what many of us *hope* we'd do and they pulled over to help. But while rendering aid, another vehicle came barreling down the exit ramp. The driver didn't see the stalled car in time and slammed into it. The force of the impact shoved the disabled vehicle forward, hitting the Sailor. The collision flipped her in the air, and she landed headfirst onto the pavement. EMS rushed her to the hospital with two head lacerations, a sprained knee, multiple scrapes, and a lower leg injury. The result? Four weeks of limited duty. —*There's no such thing as a "safe zone" on the highway, especially in the dead of night. Even when you're trying to do the right thing, roadside risks are very real. If you must exit your vehicle, treat it like entering a danger zone: eyes up, stay alert, and assume oncoming traffic can't see you. A good deed should never cost you your life.*
- **Flat Tire, Fatal Outcome.** It was 0200 on the highway, dark, quiet, and dangerous. A Navy officer was driving when he suddenly got a flat tire. Like most of us would, he pulled off to the shoulder to check it out. With little traffic and no immediate threat, it might've seemed safe enough. But highways don't take naps. As the officer stood beside his car inspecting the damage, another vehicle barreled down the road. The driver didn't see him in time. The impact launched the officer across the median and straight into the path of oncoming traffic. Tragically, a second vehicle struck him, and he died at the scene. —*It's instinct to pull over when something goes wrong, but the shoulder of a highway, especially at night, is one of the most dangerous places you can stand. Visibility is low. Reaction times are slower. And drivers may be distracted, drowsy, or even impaired. If your car is still moving, even slightly, keep going until you reach a safer spot, an off-ramp, a wide shoulder, or a lighted area if possible. Bent rims and flat tires can be replaced. You can't.*

Key Takeaways

If you're on foot near traffic, your life is in your own hands. Act accordingly. Injuries don't always come from "high-risk" tasks. A quick step into a crosswalk or a flat tire on the highway can be higher-risk than we realize. Risk management and situational awareness aren't just for the job—they're for life. Here are some things the folks in these mishaps learned the hard way. Please learn from their pain.

1. **Have a healthy fear when you're on foot.**
Just because you're walking doesn't mean you're safe. Crosswalks, sidewalks, and shoulders are part of the traffic environment and vehicles don't always stay where they're supposed to. Look for oncoming vehicles, watch your surroundings, and don't assume others see you or will avoid you.
2. **Traffic doesn't care about your right-of-way.**
Even though the pedestrian signal says "walk" or you're stopped on the shoulder, that doesn't guarantee drivers will yield. Distracted, drowsy, or impaired drivers can—and do—miss what's right in front of them or swerve out of their lane. Make eye contact, hesitate, and verify before crossing or exiting your vehicle.
3. **Never assume "they'll stop."**
That green light? Not a forcefield. That parked car behind you? It can become a projectile. That one second you take to double-check your surroundings can save you from weeks of recovery—or worse. Keep an eye on them; they may not be keeping an eye on you.
4. **Low-speed doesn't mean low risk.**
Whether you're hit at 5 mph or 55, the result is still injury. The average weight of a car in the U.S. is around 4,100 pounds. Even slow-moving vehicles can knock someone off their feet, cause internal injuries, or lead to long-term damage.

And remember, "Let's be careful out there."