



NAVAL SAFETY COMMAND SAFETY AWARENESS DISPATCH SA 26-02



Pre-Mishap Plans

The Mishap Investigation Course (USN) and Ground Mishap Investigation Course (USMC) instructs Navy and Marine Corps ground safety officers how to conduct a mishap investigation. If you're assigned the billet of unit safety officer and have not heard of or taken this course, you should look it up (*hint, hint... it's a billet requirement*). One of the many useful topics discussed in the course is the development of a pre-mishap plan (PMP). It's an unfortunate truth whenever our instructors get to this period of instruction and ask, "Who doesn't know what a pre-mishap plan is?" An alarming number of students raise their hands. Even more hands go up when asked "Who is unsure if their unit has a pre-mishap plan?" We'd like to increase the knowledge of this useful tool, so if you're one of the people who would have raised your hand to either question, this dispatch is for you.



File photo, not associated with a mishap

What Is a Pre-Mishap Plan?

People often confuse the PMP with an emergency action plan. The two plans are in the same ballpark but are not the same. Both plans relate to mishaps, but the emergency action plan is what you execute to bring the emergency part of a mishap to a conclusion. The PMP defines the actions you take after the mishap occurs to make appropriate notifications and facilitate the investigation. Simply put, the PMP is your pre-planned investigation process.

Why Does a Unit Need a Pre-Mishap Plan?

OPNAV M-5102.1/MCO 5100.29C VOL 9 requires a PMP, for one. More to the point, however, this plan is what enables an effective investigation and effective investigations prevent future mishaps. Time is crucial to the mishap investigation process, especially when collecting evidence and interviewing witnesses. Every minute spent trying to figure out a plan of action and what items are needed is additional time for evidence to get moved or lost outright and for witnesses to forget key details of the event. Wouldn't it be nice to have something already in place that says who needs to do what and provides a list of items to have pre-staged? Cue the PMP!

What All Goes Into a Pre-Mishap Plan?

This is not a cut-and-dried question. Different units will face different types of mishaps. Like with risk management, a unit should consider the most likely mishap scenarios that could occur and tailor their PMP information to meet those needs. There are PMP steps considered universal to all units. The Navy and Marine Corps Safety Investigation and Reporting Guide suggests the following:

- **Ensure care and first aid is provided to injured personnel.** This is where the emergency action plan bleeds over into the PMP. People are more important than evidence, so take care of them first.
- **Eliminate or control hazards created by the mishap.** This can get unit specific. Different units deal with varying degrees of hazardous materials. If your unit deals with a specific type of hazard, put some thought into how to deal with it if an incident happens.
- **Inform proper authorities.** Everyone knows to call the unit commander, but people rarely think about outside entities that may need to be contacted. When assessing this aspect of your plan, consider questions such as: Does local law enforcement need to know? Are there environmental concerns, i.e., does the Environmental Protection Agency need to be contacted? Will outside help be needed to handle or investigate certain hazards, e.g., explosives, chemicals, ammunition, etc.? Are you dealing with a class A mishap which requires notification to the Naval Safety Command via phone and OPREP Navy Blue? Do you have contact information for the different agencies? You don't want to figure this out after the fact.



File photo, not associated with a mishap

- **Secure the mishap site.** This is necessary for two reasons. To protect personnel from the previously mentioned hazards and to preserve evidence so it can be properly documented and collected. Include preset tasks that specify this to happen. Consider what you want the senior person at the mishap site to do before the safety officer/mishap investigator arrives.

- **Collect evidence.** This involves more than just going to the mishap site and grabbing whatever you see. There must be a logical plan for collection and proper analysis. The Navy and Marine Corps Safety Investigation and Reporting Guide recommends starting by photographing or recording the scene before moving anything. Again, time is a factor, get

this done quickly. Next, identify your witnesses, especially key witnesses. Make a list of people to prioritize based on their relation to the mishap. Next, diagram the scene. This step is more than just taking a picture; it highlights what's important and where it is in relation to everything else. Once all this is done, then the evidence can be physically collected. Make sure you consider any time-sensitive evidence that should be prioritized, like blood or urine samples.

Common Pre-Mishap Plan Oversights and Issues

- **Not allocating investigation gear beforehand.** Creating your PMP is the first step, the next is collecting all the necessary gear. Most units won't need a complex investigation kit, but that doesn't mean you want to go shopping for a camera and caution tape after a mishap has already happened. Plan out what you will need and have it stored and ready to go.
- **Not updating the plan for deployment.** Deployments are naturally complicated. Mishaps tend to complicate things by themselves. Put the two together and you have a recipe for a bad time. Investigating a mishap may be particularly hard if the personnel normally tasked to do so are on separate ships or in different countries. Have a plan for how a mishap investigation will work overseas.
- **Delays in reporting.** Failing to notify the appropriate entities in a timely manner can be a major roadblock to an investigation. Some investigations need outside support or may be escalated from a unit investigation to a safety investigation board convened by a higher authority. The only way these boards can be convened quickly enough to be effective is if the higher authority has been given the necessary information when they need it. Plan out what types of mishaps need to be elevated and the appropriate timeline. When in doubt, contact your higher level safety office or the Naval Safety Command for guidance.

Key Takeaway

The PMP is a crucial tool for mishap and hazard reduction.

Unfortunately, not nearly enough people are aware of the importance, or even the existence, of a unit pre-mishap plan. If you are unfamiliar with the process or want to establish or improve your pre-mishap plan, seek out the resources discussed and put them to good use.

The most recent versions of OPNAV M-5102.1/MCO 5100.29C VOL 9 (Navy and Marine Corps Safety Investigation and Reporting Manual) and the associated Navy and Marine Corps Safety Investigation and Reporting Guide, which contains a sample PMP in Appendix B, can be found at the following links:

- [OPNAV M-5102.1/MCO 5100.29C Vol. 9](https://navalsafetycommand.navy.mil/Media/Safety-Awareness/)
- [Navy and Marine Corps Safety Investigation and Reporting Guide](https://navalsafetycommand.navy.mil/Media/Safety-Awareness/)

And remember, “Let’s be careful out there”