



NAVAL SAFETY COMMAND SAFETY AWARENESS DISPATCH SA 26-12



101 Critical Days of Summer

Summer is coming shortly and many of our personnel are planning to or are already engaging in warm weather activities. Something to keep in mind as we head into the season though is the 27 Sailors and Marines who died last summer and the more than 300 other off-duty mishaps. These are statistics we're obviously hoping to reduce this year. The following is a random sampling of summer activity-related mishaps to keep in mind this season.

A Relaxing Day in the Sun-Burn

A Sailor who was TAD to attend a school was dismissed early at 9:30 a.m. (*must be a pretty relaxed schoolhouse*). He and a fellow classmate decided to take the early release as an opportunity to hit the beach. The Sailor applied sunblock (*initially*) before going in the water for 1.5 hours. He then had some snacks and decided to lay out in the sun, eventually nodding off (*how relaxing, hopefully his friend keeps an eye on him*). His friend then left to go find lunch. The Sailor woke up 2.5 hours later (*probably wondering where his friend was*) and decided to go back in the water for another hour before drying off and heading back to his hotel. The next morning the Sailor learned sunburn can be more severe than just red irritated skin. He woke up to find painful blisters on his shoulders and back. He went to the ER, was diagnosed with second-degree sunburn and placed on two days SIQ.

– *You may not be aware, but sunburns come in multiple degrees, just like thermal burns. First-degree (red skin, mildly painful), second-degree (painful, blistering, swelling; what this guy had) and third-degree (all skin layers damaged to the tissue). Fortunately, third-degree is pretty much reserved for people stranded on desert islands and the like, but far too many service members have unnecessarily subjected themselves to second-degree sunburn. It is pretty easy to avoid, though. You simply wear clothing or put on sunblock; here is the secret this Sailor didn't know apparently: REAPPLY the sunblock regularly.*



Crashing After a Long Drive

A Sailor went out of the local area for a long weekend. He wanted to maximize his time with family and friends, so he decided to stay through the last day of liberty, wake up early and drive the three hours to report for muster. To further maximize his time, he also stayed up late on his final night out of town. After getting about 4.5 hours sleep (*nice and "rested"*), he got up and hit the road. The Sailor made it almost two hours before the lack of sleep and long drive caught up with him. He started nodding off and ended up veering off the road and flipping his car (*so much for making morning muster*). With the use of a smart watch, he was able to call 911 and was taken to a hospital for superficial injuries.

– *We all want to make the most of our leave and liberty, but we also have to be realistic with our time. Fatigued driving can be just as dangerous as drunk driving. Neither your unit nor your family or friends benefit if you don't survive the drive from one location to another. Plan enough time into your vacations for rest AND a safe drive.*

A Farewell to Arm-Hair

A Sailor returned from a local beach event with plans for a relaxing evening of summer grilling (*relax he shall not*). He added coal to his grill, lit it and closed the lid to let the temperature get to the desired point. After waiting a period of time, the Sailor found the coals had a good smolder but decided he would need more coals to get the grill hot enough, so he dumped more on top of the smoldering coals (*and here is where things get spicy*) and then added lighter fluid. What the Sailor didn't realize (*despite the mishap report claiming he was an avid griller*) is lighter fluid typically needs a spark or active flame to ignite, smoldering coals aren't hot enough to reach its flash point. Spraying lighter fluid on smoldering coals will simply cause the lighter fluid to instantly evaporate into a thick layer of vapor, *highly flammable* vapor. Seeing the added coals and lighter fluid had not ignited as he had hoped, the Sailor took his butane lighter, reached into the grill (*and into the cloud of vapor that was building up*) and clicked the sparker. BOOM. The cloud of vapor ignited. The coals ignited. The Sailor's arm ignited. Fortunately, the fireball that engulfed the Sailor's arm dissipated quickly, but he sustained burns that quickly blistered. He closed the grill and headed to the ER.

– *Never, and we repeat, NEVER add lighter fluid to an active grill. If you need to add more charcoal to an active grill,*

simply wait for them to ignite off the already present coals. Patience is the virtue of the true grill master. Alternatively, if you need to speed things up consider investing in a charcoal chimney starter. If you haven't heard of it, look it up.

♪Watch Out for That Tree♪

A Marine decided it was time to try out jet skiing (*the mishap report made specific note of his limited experience*). He headed to the local river, rented said boating vessel and hit the water. All was going well until the Marine started getting close to shore. The intrepid boater let out a burst of speed, then released the accelerator expecting the jet ski to slow down more quickly. He simultaneously attempted a turning maneuver (*probably because that sneaky shore was suddenly getting closer*). Trying to turn while at speed resulted in the Marine flying off the jet ski, onto the riverbank and into a tree. The Marine decided to wait a day to go to medical (*alright there is no need to act tough*), where he was diagnosed with a concussion and multiple contusions on his arms, legs and head. – *Jet skiing is a fun activity to take up in summertime, but one should familiarize themselves with the system before going all out.*

Drinking, Swimming, Drowning

Some of the previous mishap examples were a little lighthearted, this last one is anything but. A group of Marines gathered at a lake to enjoy time off with food and a few alcoholic beverages. At least one of the Marines enjoyed more than a few. The medical report after the incident showed his blood alcohol content was 0.18% (*yes, that's a 1 before the 8, for comparison legally drunk is .08%*). After ensuring he was thoroughly inebriated, this Marine decided to go for a swim. Shortly after he entered the water the Marines on shore realized their friend was no longer on the surface. One of the Marines swam to the drowning Marine's last position, was able to recover him and pull him to shore. Those on shore started CPR and called emergency services, who arrived shortly after and assumed treatment of the victim. The Marine's friends were under the impression he had died as EMS personnel departed with him; however, the EMTs were able to revive the Marine en route to the hospital. While he may have survived the drowning incident, the Marine sustained injuries to various internal organs. – *Many service members like to enjoy adult beverages during get-togethers like this. There is a difference between drinking recreationally and recklessly, though. This Marine is extraordinarily lucky to have survived this incident. He didn't nearly drown; he drowned and was then resuscitated. Most people who reach that point aren't as fortunate. Look out for yourself and avoid getting to this level of intoxication. Look out for your friends, if they have reached this level of intoxication, they have likely lost any semblance of self-awareness. Keep them away from unsafe activities (like swimming) and help them sober up.*

Key Takeaways

This isn't the end-all list of summer hazards, just some examples of summer activities that went wrong. We also recognize hazards exist year-round and these activities aren't exclusive to the months, but the summer months can mean increased participation in these activities. It can only help to be more aware of what to look out for. Here are some details from last year to keep in mind this season.

- 1. Be alert during your drives.** Automobiles were the primary factor in fatalities last summer with 11 motorcycle and 12 four-wheeled vehicle mishaps. The causal factors in these 23 incidents varied but major contributors were either speed or fatigue. This is something to be especially mindful of on those long drives to vacation destinations.
- 2. Be careful when you hit the athletics fields.** Various sporting accidents caused most of the injuries in the previous summer with basketball, weightlifting, baseball/softball and biking being the main culprits. We want you to stay active, but you can't be active if you hurt yourself.
- 3. Be mentally present and proactive.** Nearly all summer mishaps were caused by a lapse in judgment or situational awareness. Make sure you are conscious of the hazards around you. That's true for any season and activity, but as we get into summer, we hope you are particularly mindful of the hazards associated with this season.

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