



NAVAL SAFETY COMMAND SAFETY AWARENESS DISPATCH SA 26-19



101 Critical Days Of Summer Midpoint Update

With the 101 Critical Days of Summer (CDOS) being such an important safety campaign, we like to keep a “report card” on how our off-duty Sailors and Marines are faring during this time. Part of a proper evaluation is a mid-period review, so as we hit the halfway point of the 101 CDOS July 15, we wanted to give an update on how we’re doing.

We’ve lost 12 service members in just over seven weeks since the beginning of the 101 CDOS on May 25. Five were motorcycle fatalities, six were four-wheeled motor vehicle (PMV4) fatalities, and one was a pool drowning. These deaths are obviously the most lamentable, but they’re not the only off-duty incidents impacting our naval service readiness. Over this short time, there have been more than 100 non-fatal events resulting in injuries to Sailors and Marines. These mishaps result in a cumulative 325 total days of lost time as service members were either hospitalized or SIQ, and a cumulative 1,284 days of personnel restricted to a light or limited duty status. *(Note: This data was extracted from the Risk Management Information system July 15. As many mishap reports are not submitted up to 30 days following an incident, the total number of incidents will likely increase.)*

The primary culprit in these mishaps continues to be motor vehicle-related mishaps with 62 crashes split evenly between motorcycles and PMV4s. As with last year’s trends, sports and recreation injuries were the next highest mishap category with 36 incidents. These were pretty evenly distributed between the various popular sports and other activities, but simple exercise (weightlifting and running), took the crown in this category accounting for 20% of the sports and recreational mishaps so far. The final 26 incidents fall in the miscellaneous category, 40% of which were slips/trips/falls and the rest a variety of mishaps involving bladed tools, powered tools, food prep, furniture building/moving and one particularly interesting bug removal incident (*more on that shortly*).

Clearly our off-duty activities have a notable impact on fleet and manpower readiness. These incidents highlight the need to apply sound risk awareness and mitigation strategies to our everyday lives. The following narratives highlight this lesson.

Wasp Problems

During summer people become more active outdoors. The same is true for insects. A Marine found a wasp nest at his home and decided to get creative with his eviction of the pests. This Marine apparently saw a trend online (*ah, where many of our problems start*) of using a cup of gasoline (*yes, we said gasoline*) to suffocate the wasps with fuel vapors. The Marine slammed his cup of gas up to the nest to trap the insects inside with the vapors. He, however, dropped the cup in the process splashing gasoline on his face and eyes. – *We cannot emphasize more how ludicrous this idea is. In addition to the risk of pouring a highly flammable skin and eye irritant on yourself, which happened here, you place yourself in direct vicinity of stinging insects, which don’t take kindly to assault. In contrast, there are highly effective aerosol insecticides that allow you to stand far away from the angry insects as you eradicate them.*

Hedge Trimming Turns to Finger Trimming

The summer months are prime time to show off one’s yard and that means more yard maintenance. A Sailor was conducting cleanup of tall bushes at her house with a hedge trimmer. The Sailor used a three-step ladder to reach the top of the bushes but still had to hold the trimmer at an elevated position, requiring more exertion. After 45 minutes the Sailor started to tire. The front of the trimmer slipped out of her left hand while her right hand remained on the control button. She tried to regain control of the tool with her left hand, but her fingers were caught in the blade resulting in deep cuts requiring 15 stitches. – *A couple of things could have helped here. First off, always use appropriate PPE, even in off-duty activities. This situation calls for sturdy gloves, both to protect one’s hand from cuts and to provide better grip on the tool. A taller ladder would also have allowed for easier and better control of the trimmer. Even yardwork demands proper planning and prep.*



Artificial intelligence algorithms from GENAi were used in this product's development to generate a graphic showing the current number of reported off-duty mishaps impacting warfighter readiness since the beginning of the 101 Critical Days of Summer May 25. These AI-generated elements were reviewed and edited by relevant DOW personnel to verify appropriateness and compliance with DOW policies and guidance.

Time to Upgrade the Lawnmower

Continuing with the yard maintenance theme, this next incident involved a riding lawnmower that should have been retired. A Sailor was cutting the grass on a riding mower and approached a sloped portion of his yard. As he maneuvered the hill, the lawn mower started to tip over. The Sailor made a sharp turn attempting to correct the mower, but fell off in the process. As he fell, an exposed blade from the mower struck the Sailor's calf causing a deep laceration. The Sailor had to be treated at the ER and went home with a wound care vacuum and numerous follow-up appointments. – *We understand upgrading something like a riding mower can be pricey, but using tools with modern safeties, i.e., automatic shutoffs, pays dividends in preventing injuries like this. Of note, this had to be a pretty old lawnmower. The report doesn't specify how old, but automatic shutoffs became standard in the 1970s.*

Running Oneself into the Ground

A Marine was trying to keep up with his PT this summer and went for a late afternoon run. For those not familiar with North Carolina summers, they are extremely hot and humid, and this day was no exception. The Marine passed out some time into his run and was fortunately found by another Marine who called 911. The Marine was taken to the emergency room for treatment. Upon recovery, the Marine was told he was dehydrated and had overexerted himself causing rhabdomyolysis (*where your muscles start to break down*). – *One main message of the summer months is to be cognizant of the heat. Even the most highly fit people can succumb to heat stress injuries if they don't prepare and exercise smartly. Proper hydration is the one of the most important requirements, but exercising at the right time of day is important too. If you can avoid exercising during the hottest portion of the day, do so. Finally, pay attention to your body and if you are feeling any degree of dizziness, it's time to rein it in for the day.*

High Speed Leads to Tragic Ending

Most of the previous examples were relatively minor incidents or close calls. Unfortunately, this final narrative demonstrates the most severe consequences of reckless driving. A Marine was the passenger in a PMV4 traveling at an estimated speed of more than 100 mph. The vehicle clipped another car, causing the driver to lose control, leave the roadway, enter a ditch and strike a tree. The impact split the vehicle in half, ejecting the Marine. He was transported to a hospital where he was pronounced dead. The driver and another passenger also died in the crash. Due to the severity of the injuries, the Marine was initially identified through the military ID found on his person. – *We apologize for ending this dispatch on such a tragic note, but motor vehicle mishaps continue to account for most off-duty injuries and fatalities. This example serves as a sobering reminder that excessive speed leaves no margin for error. If you are behind the wheel, slow down. If you are a passenger, speak up. No destination or momentary thrill is worth the loss of life.*

Key Takeaways

As far as report cards go, we're pretty much on par with previous years' halfway point data, but we can always try to do better. As noted by the lost time and limited duty numbers, these incidents have a prominent impact on readiness in addition to the obvious impact of the service members' personal lives. Since summer activities vary, there isn't a single cure-all piece of advice, but the following guidance (paraphrased from the CDOS opener) addresses common factors driving most of these mishaps and how you can avoid similar outcomes.

- 1. Drive Smart.** Speed and fatigue continue to be some of the most common factors in motor vehicle mishaps. Make sure you get from point A to point B safely, drive the speed limit and drive well rested.
- 2. Be careful participating in sports and exercise.** In addition to all the ways people injure themselves during summertime activities, excessive heat is the biggest factor to keep in mind when you are outside getting the blood pumping, and one that can kill you if you're not careful. Make sure you hydrate, wear the right gear, and don't overexert yourself.
- 3. Be mentally present and proactive.** Many mishaps are caused by a lapse in judgement, awareness, or preparation. Plan out what you are doing and pay attention to the hazards around you. Be mindful of the specific risks associated with whatever summertime activities you're engaged in.

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