



NAVAL SAFETY COMMAND SAFETY AWARENESS DISPATCH SA 26-20



Speeding Mishaps

Speeding is considered an aggressive behavior by the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) and was a reported factor in roughly one-third of all motor vehicle fatalities for more than two decades. In 2024 alone, speeding was a contributing factor in 29% of all traffic fatalities. It not only endangers the life of the speeder, but everyone around them. Life comes at you fast; speeding could cause it to come at you faster.

There are consequences beyond getting caught and ticketed. Speeding results in: 1) greater potential for loss of vehicle control; 2) reduced effectiveness of occupant protection equipment; 3) longer stopping distance; 4) increased degree of crash severity leading to more severe injuries; 5) economic implications of a speed-related crash and, 6) less time to react.

Of note, Virginia just passed a new law that took effect July 1, 2026, that marks it as the first U.S. state to require certain drivers who hit 100 mph to install devices on their vehicles that physically prevent them from speeding. Judges will have the option to order drivers to install "Intelligent speed assistance" or ISA devices, instead of passing down jail time or suspending drivers' licenses.

When it comes to vehicular mishaps, there's a recurring theme that shows up faster than a sport bike on an open highway: things escalate quickly when speed is involved. One second, you're enjoying the ride, the next second you're part of a chain reaction that can't be undone.

Slippery Shenanigans

Two service members discovered rainy conditions can quickly derail evening plans. Right outside their base, the unfortunate duo rolled their vehicle after accelerating to beat a traffic light. There was a slight rise and dip in the intersection, leading to the dip being filled with standing water. When the speeding vehicle hit the water, the vehicle pulled to the left. After attempting to counter-steer, the rear tires found their grip again and spun the vehicle around 180 degrees. A curb helped bring that spin to an end, but due to inertia, it also caused the vehicle to roll onto its right side. — *Fortunately, both service members were uninjured from their practical physics demonstration. Contributing factors included speeding and poor weather conditions.*

Group Ride, Group Risk

Riding with friends can be one of the best parts of owning a motorcycle — until spacing, speed and communication all start to break down. A group of riders was traveling at approximately 70 mph on an interstate at night when another rider attempted to merge into the group at a significantly slower speed (around 55 mph). What happens next is basic physics: Closing distance + speed displacement = no time to react. One of the riders of the group slammed on the brakes but didn't have enough time to avoid the impact and collided with the rear tire of the merging motorcycle, causing both riders to be ejected. One rider suffered a traumatic amputation of the left foot at the scene with the other sustaining multiple fractures. — *Let's pause here and do the math: merging into a fast-moving group at a slower speed leaves everyone else trying to solve a problem they didn't create and don't have time to fix. Add in nighttime visibility with limited experience and you've got a perfect storm for the kind of riding adventure you don't want.*

Alcohol + Speed = Recipe for Disaster

Alcohol impairs judgment, especially behind the wheel. Add speed into the mix and you have a surefire recipe for disaster. After a night out while on leave, a service member decided it was OK to ride with a friend who'd been drinking. The drunk driver was speeding and lost control of the vehicle. The vehicle rolled multiple times and was totaled. — *While the driver and passenger only suffered minor injuries, they walked away from a crash that could have killed them and others on the road. Contributing factors included driving under the influence, speeding and poor judgment of the passenger to ride with a driver who had been drinking.*

High Speed Results in Two Fatalities

At approximately 2:45 a.m., while traveling at speeds over 100 mph, two service members were killed when they ran a stop sign at a T-intersection, impacting the cement retaining wall at the end of the road. The vehicle caught fire, killing them both.



— Excessive speeds like this are not only reckless for the driver but everyone around them. The greatest danger in this example is how fast “crash energy” multiplies, which reduces the effectiveness of standard safety features, like airbags and seat belts. Contributing factors included excessive speed and failure to yield at a stop sign.

140 MPH Problem Set

Let's talk about a number that should immediately raise eyebrows: 140 mph. During a morning group motorcycle ride on a major interstate, a rider was traveling at this speed when their front tire contacted the rear tire of another motorcycle. The report didn't specify if the entire group was riding at 140 mph, or if the rider was speeding to catch up. Regardless, there's no “recovery” at that speed, only a poor outcome. The rider, who'd only been riding for four months, lost control, was ejected and died at the scene. — *Contributing factors? Extreme speed and limited riding experience (only a few months after completing the basic rider course). Let's take a moment here: 140 mph isn't just “a little fast.” It's operating in a space where reaction time, braking distance and margin for error are essentially zero. Pair that with inexperience and it's just a matter of time before something happens leading to serious injury or death.*

Do the Right Thing

Three service members were leaving a club around 2:30 a.m. to head back to another service member's apartment. While they did the right thing having a designated driver, the driver did the wrong thing when he disregarded posted speed limits. On their way to the apartment, they struck a curb at about 80 mph, causing the vehicle to hop the median and spin out into the other lane. — *While they walked away from the crash with just one suffering from a concussion, the vehicle was totaled. Contributing factors included late-night driving and excessive speed.*

Late for Watch, Early for Disaster

Running late may drive more bad decisions than just about anything else – motorcycles amplify the ramifications of those decisions. In this situation, a rider was traveling to duty, reportedly weaving through traffic and splitting lanes at approximately 80 mph in a 45-mph zone. No skid marks were found at the scene (meaning there was likely no attempt to brake before impact). A vehicle turned left from the opposing lane at an intersection and the rider struck the oncoming vehicle head-on at full speed. EMS arrived within two minutes of the incident, but the service member was pronounced dead at the scene. — *Contributing factors included being late to work led to excessive speed, risky lane splitting and reduced visibility at dusk. Read that again: no braking + no correction = no second chance. When your speed is so high that it eliminates any sort of reaction time, you're not riding anymore, you're just committing to whatever happens next.*

Key Takeaways

Speed is a multiplier for stopping distance, crash damage and injury severity. You cannot react in time when you only have half a second to react. Higher speed doesn't just make things happen faster – it removes your ability to fix mistakes. At 80, 100 or 140 mph, you're no longer building options; you're eliminating them. Running late is not a valid reason to double your speed, split lanes or take risks you wouldn't otherwise take. Time lost can be recovered. Lives cannot.

The real risks of speeding include:

- 1) Increased likelihood of crashes:** According to a Colorado State Patrol [news release](#), drivers have less time to react to sudden changes in traffic, pedestrians or merging vehicles at higher speeds. This significantly increases the likelihood of a collision. For example, traveling at 60 mph instead of 50 mph cuts your reaction time by 20%. Speeding makes handling turns, curves and evasive maneuvers harder. The vehicle's stability is compromised, raising the risk of losing control.
- 2) Extended stopping distances:** As speed increases, so does the distance required to stop. The stopping distance at 60 mph (292 feet) is more than 44 percent longer than the stopping distance at 50 mph (221 feet) even though 60 mph is only 20 percent faster than 50 mph, according to the NHTSA. Higher speeds make it more difficult and, in some cases, impossible to avoid obstacles or stop suddenly.
- 3) Severity of injuries:** High-speed collisions result in more severe injuries due to the increased impact force. At higher speeds, safety features like airbags are less effective, increasing the risk of severe injuries. Traveling at 100 mph straight into a concrete barrier (like the incident above) is akin to jumping from the top of the Empire State Building. The same speed. The same instant stop. There's no airbag that can save you from that.

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