



# Naval Safety Command

## SAFETY AWARENESS DISPATCH



SA 22-15

### THE "50 1/2 CRITICAL DAYS OF SUMMER" — A mid-term report card.

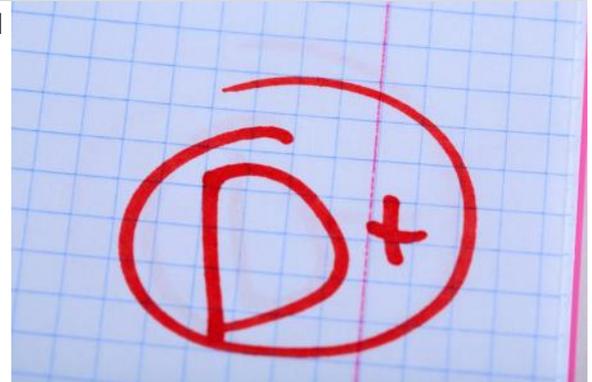
As we crossed the mid-semester point of the 101 Critical Days of Summer, we took a snapshot of how well – or not well – the naval services scored during their off-duty time. While it appears we are on track for an overall passing grade, making the “Dean’s Honor Roll” would be a stretch. We’ve already lost 16 Sailors and Marines in these first 50 1/2 days, which is 16 too many.

Before we look at some individual grades, here’s the breakdown of the activities that we’re getting hurt the most while doing. There were nearly 100 off duty mishaps. That’s approximately 2 per day if you didn’t already do the math.

- 1) Unsurprisingly, PMV-4 topped the list with 21% of the total mishaps, including five fatalities.
- 2) The apparent second was PMV-2, with 16% of the mishaps and four fatalities.
- 3) Tied with PMV-2 was team sports. Basketball led in this category, followed by baseball and softball.
- 4) “General Outdoor activities” scored fourth, tied with individual PT-related mishaps at a handful each.

Now that we’ve covered the stats, let’s look at some individual performances. As always, we ask that you self-assess as you read about your brethren's struggles to get through the summer semester in one piece. Take stock of your activities and choices, knowing it’s not too late to get your safety grade up if luck is the only thing that has kept you out of our database so far.

- A Walk On The Beach. A Sailor lacerated his foot while walking along the beach, requiring 11 stitches. At first read, it seems this was an unavoidable accident, but the truth came out in the report. The Sailor failed to adhere to the local water-safety brief about wearing footwear on the beach due to the high concentration of coral. — *This Sailor gets a D for not following directions.*
- Playing With Fire. In another seemingly unavoidable accident, a Sailor was tending to a campfire when he dropped a burning log on his feet. He was treated for minor burns at the local emergency room (ER). The report says (*without any details*) that the Sailor dropped the burning log “due to horseplay.” Playing around with or near an open fire is just asking to get burned. — *This class jester gets an F for fooling around with fire and also a note home to schedule a parent-teacher conference.*
- No Good Deed Goes Unpunished. A Sailor volunteered to work outside cleaning up a local school’s grounds from 0900-1500. Having been outside in the hot sun for six straight hours, the Sailor suffered severe enough sunburn that he sought medical treatment for burns the next day. This mishap teaches us that we don’t need to sunbathe at the beach or pool to get sunburned. Anytime you anticipate prolonged exposure to the sun is a time for sunscreen. — *This performance is a D+, but with extra credit added for volunteering on Memorial Day weekend, we’ll bump his grade up to a C+.*
- Let Me Spleen Something To You. A Marine was dirt-bike riding on an established trail when he approached a turn too quickly, panicked, pulled the front brake lever, and was thrown over the handlebars. Being a Marine, he got up, returned to his vehicle, and went home. Later, he felt pain and wisely decided to go to the ER, where they discovered two fractured ribs and a torn spleen. The report noted that the Marine, while an experienced dirt bike rider, was unfamiliar with this particular trail. He would have done himself a favor if he’d taken it slower the first lap. — *This Marine earned a C- for not applying some real-time risk assessment, but we’ll bump his grade to a B for wearing all proper PPE, which likely saved him from worse injuries (or getting killed).*



## THE 50 1/2 CRITICAL DAYS OF SUMMER — A midterm report card

- **Dad Joke:** “Why didn’t the Greek warrior play volleyball?” During the second set of a volleyball game in a base gym, a senior Sailor heard a pop in his right foot and fell to the floor. Their injury was later diagnosed as a ruptured Achilles, requiring surgery. There’s not much more in the report, other than the players warmed up for 15 minutes before the game (good work!) — *We’ll round this senior Sailor up to a C+ for warming up and giving him another chance to make up the grade. While the report didn’t identify any cause for this mishap, the Mayo Clinic lists age and weight as contributing factors and recommends increasing training intensity slowly over time. So, while warmups are helpful, they won’t always overcome being out of shape for the sport. (Dad Joke Answer: “Because he had an Achilles heel”).*
- **Going One-For-Five.** While operating a chop saw, a Sailor’s hand “went into a running blade,” according to the report. As expected, the indiscriminate saw did its job, severing the Sailor’s little, middle, ring, and index fingers. — *This mishap was gruesome and is heartbreaking. Regretfully, it’s an F for this Sailor. There are only a couple basic rules when using power saws: 1) Wear eye and ear protection, and 2) Keep your body parts away from the blade.*
- **Three Amigos.** This report starts with a “Sailor was walking back to the ship after an evening of drinking” (you knew one of these narratives would involve drinking, didn’t you?). On his walk, Sailor 1 saw and confronted Sailor 2 and Sailor 3 (the report doesn’t say why). While Sailor 1 was arguing with Sailor 2, Sailor 3 struck Sailor 1 in the face. Sailors 2 and 3 then proceeded to strike Sailor 1 several more times. Sailor 1 was later awakened by shore patrol and taken to the ship where he was treated for a broken nose. — *This wasn’t a mishap, but rather a drunken, foolish example of not being good shipmates. All three Sailors get a zero and In-School Suspension. Actually, NJP is more like it, but you get the report card theme. The lesson here is don’t drink to the point where you’re looking for a fight. Life is too short.*
- **Go To The Head Of The Class.** In our final story, a Sailor was riding his motorcycle when a car in front of him abruptly cut him off. The Sailor made his best effort to avoid the car, slowing from 45 MPH to about 30 MPH, but it wasn’t enough. The Sailor impacted the front right side of the car, was ejected onto the road, and slid approximately 30 feet. He was treated for bruises and road rash. Why such minor injuries, you ask? He was wearing **all** required PPE and traveling the speed limit. — *Sometimes an accident is un-preventable, that’s why PPE is so important. A+ for this Sailor and his positive example of what to do.*

### Key Takeaways

The average grade of our examples was a D+. As a service, we’ve exceeded the five-year average of off-duty fatalities at this point in the summer, so there’s definitely room for improvement. The takeaways here are all too familiar because the behavior that drives them is consistent in off-duty mishap reports yearly.

1. **Don’t drink and [fill in the blank].** For today, let’s put it this way: Just don’t drink to excess. We understand that a few drinks while hanging out with friends and family is OK (if you’re of legal age). However, we beg you to realize that it lowers your inhibitions and raises your “bravery” level. Ease up on the drinking, and you’ll likely see dangerous activities for what they indeed are and apply some healthy risk management.

2. **Think before you [fill in your activity here].** Most mishaps are a result of decisions that were made without considering the risks and hazards involved. Whether skipping warm-ups before the game, not wearing PPE, or disregarding warnings, we can significantly reduce human-error-related mishaps by working on our safety mindfulness. It should be ever-present both on duty and off. We want you to spend your summer having fun – and we’re pretty sure that’s not going to happen in the emergency room.

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