



NAVAL SAFETY COMMAND

SAFETY AWARENESS DISPATCH



SA 24-12

Pedestrian Mishaps II

*"I've noticed that even people who believe in fate look both ways before crossing the street."
— Stephen Hawking*

Remember being told, "Look both ways before you cross the street?" Even though our parents also told us not to swallow gum because it takes seven years to digest, and not to touch a toad ('cause you'll get warts), but the crossing-the-street thing is legit advice. And it is especially legit today, with more than double the number of vehicles on the roads since the 1980s (*yes, some of us are that old*). Add modern earbuds and smartphones to the equation and BAM! (*pun intended*), the risk of a pedestrian being hit by a car goes way up. We've averaged more than 20 pedestrian mishaps a year in the naval services, including five yearly fatalities, since 2017. This fiscal year, we've already had one Sailor killed and two others permanently disabled in pedestrian accidents. In case the numbers aren't convincing enough for you to consider your walking and running habits near traffic, we've included some real-life examples of the unnecessary risks our fellow Sailors and Marines took and the painful, sometimes tragic consequences.



- **Trust But Verify.** At approximately 2200, a Sailor was walking in a crosswalk at an intersection and was struck by a car that was making a right turn at the red light (*not yielding to the pedestrian*). Fortunately for this unsuspecting Sailor, the car was only traveling five mph when it hit him. At the emergency room, he was diagnosed with contusions and bruising to his coccyx (tailbone), lower back and left shoulder. — *This example shows that even if you have the green "walk" signal, it's no guarantee that you're safe to cross. We'll repeat it for old time's sake, "Look both ways before you cross the street!"*
- **Dark N Stormy.** At approximately 0540, a Sailor was walking across the road during dark and rainy conditions and not in an identified crosswalk when he was struck by a vehicle going roughly **62 mph** in a **25 mph** speed limited zone (*Good Golly!*). The Sailor landed 100 feet from the impact point and sustained multiple severe injuries to his head, spine, ribs and legs. He is expected to be medically discharged from the service. Although the driver was at fault for striking a pedestrian, the report says the Sailor "lacked situational awareness of the surrounding environment" during dark and rainy conditions and wasn't wearing reflective clothing. — *This Sailor had nothing in his favor. Darkness, rain, not crossing at a designated lighted crosswalk, and non-reflective clothes all made him nearly invisible to vehicle traffic. Putting your safety in the hands of strangers driving 2+ ton vehicles is a careless way to go through life. Please learn from this Sailor's mistake.*
- **Friends Don't Let Friends...** A Marine was walking to the base alone at 0145. As he was crossing a four-lane highway where there was no lighting or crosswalk, he was struck by a vehicle. He was taken to a local medical center with multiple traumatic injuries, where he was stabilized and transported by air to a regional medical center for further care. He was pronounced brain dead and his family had to make the painful decision to take him off life support. According to the report, the Marine consumed alcohol with friends before the incident. He decided to leave the bar on foot and that the last time his friends saw. — *While the report doesn't note the Marine's blood alcohol content that night, he already had two strikes against him by crossing a four-lane highway in the dark and not in a designated crosswalk. Regardless of his mental state, walking home on a dark highway was a tragic choice, and this Marine's friends missed an opportunity to weigh in. Look out for yourself and your friends, especially after drinks.*

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- 🎵 You Fill up My Senses. 🎵 A Sailor was on a run after work (while listening to a podcast on his earbuds). As he attempted to cross the street at a designated crosswalk, a vehicle hit him as it turned left at the intersection. He suffered a broken fibula and wrist, a detached left ear and a concussion. The report notes that the vehicle was at fault, but also says “had the Sailor been more aware, used elements of risk management and removed earbuds before using the crosswalk, it is possible the mishap could have been avoided.” We agree with that assessment. —*Running with earbuds removes one of your critical senses for detecting hazards. We’re not saying ditch them altogether (we like ‘em too), but take a pause when in higher-risk areas like intersections and remove the earbuds for the few seconds it takes to focus on your safety. That podcast won’t change your life as much as multiple debilitating injuries.*
- Shoulda Listened to Mom. In the words of the report, at nearly midnight a “Marine was jaywalking across a street, did not look both ways and was struck by an oncoming vehicle.” He was taken to the hospital, where he was diagnosed with a broken tibia (shin). Adding to his misery, he was cited for jaywalking. —*It’s a simple rule, and this time the report said it for us: Listen to your elders and look both ways please.*
- Crashed on the Last Lap. A Sailor was on temporary duty and staying in a hotel. After work, he went for a jog from his hotel down a dead-end street on one sidewalk and back up to the hotel on the other, crossing in a well-marked crosswalk. He successfully ran several laps over half an hour, but then his luck ran out. When crossing the road for the xxth time, he did not see an oncoming car until the last second. The Sailor jumped back but could not entirely avoid the vehicle, which struck him on his left side. He landed headfirst on the asphalt. The Sailor was transported to the emergency room, where x-rays and CAT scans revealed no broken bones. He was treated for a laceration above his left eye with six stitches. —*Don’t rely on signs and marked crosswalks to defend against inattentive drivers. If they’re inattentive, they may not see the signs, crosswalks, or you. You have to scan your route for hazards like oncoming vehicles. It only takes that one time when you’re fatigued and not paying attention for disaster to strike. This example is one of those that reminds us why we always say...(see the [Blue Words](#) at the bottom).*

Key Takeaways

Distractions and sensory overload with today’s technologies can challenge anyone’s ability to stay focused. Walking or jogging near multi-ton metal projectiles moving at significantly higher speeds than you increase your risk. Please help us help you by reviewing these reminders so you don’t end up in a future edition of pedestrian mishaps. We bet you already know the first takeaway:

- ✓ **Look both ways (twice) before stepping into a street.** Your kindergarten teacher should have already explained this one.
- ✓ **Use crosswalks or cross at a corner.** If a crosswalk isn’t available, find the most well-lit, open spot to cross.
- ✓ **Never trust a driver.** Never assume the vehicle sees you and is going to stop. This rule applies even in a crosswalk and when you have the green “Walk” sign. The driver may be distracted or in a hurry (*many of them are*), so don’t cross until you confirm they’ve stopped.
- ✓ **Don’t be a distracted walker/runner.** Just as drivers may become distracted for various reasons, e.g., phones, books or loud music, pedestrians can fall victim too. The better you see, hear and manage the hazards around you, the safer you’ll be.
- ✓ **Stay off the interstate.** Besides being illegal in most states, walking along the highway is extremely dangerous,
- ✓ **Don’t drink and walk.** According to national stats, half of all traffic crashes resulting in pedestrian casualties involve alcohol consumption. About 30% of the total was on the part of the pedestrian. Don’t underestimate how much alcohol can affect your judgment. It can kill you in an instant.

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