



NAVAL SAFETY COMMAND

SAFETY AWARENESS DISPATCH



SA 24-11

E-Scooter Mishaps

Episode VI – “The Return of the E-scooter”

“So a Priest, a Lawyer, and a bear are all riding e-scooters...” (a Chaplain, a JAG, and a Bear for the military crowd). That sounds like a joke with a bad punchline. Well, it looks like most e-scooter rides turn out with a bad punchline themselves, so forgive us for the bad-dad-joke intro. With warmer weather returning here in the northern hemisphere, e-scooters are back on the road. So, along with the bad-dad-jokes, it’s time for another fatherly conversation about e-scooters.

The latest national statistics still make a good (*bad*) point. ER visits in the U.S. from e-scooter crashes have increased again, just as they have every year for six years, jumping **660%** (from 7,700 in year 1 to about 51,000 in year



6). We want you to NOT be one of the numbers in next year’s study (yes, we know that’s bad grammar). By our own unofficial SA Division count, there were 24 *reported* Navy and Marine mishaps in RMI (we bet there were more *unreported*). For yet another year, we found more new Navy and Marine Corps scooter disasters in FY-23 than we could use. Sadly, we’ve saved almost enough e-scooter narratives to write a book, not just an SA Dispatch! Read on with this thought in mind: “*Just because you can, doesn’t mean you should.*”

- *♪ Destination Unknown. ♪ (Top Gun soundtrack)* The report doesn’t tell us much about the accident itself, but it gives a great picture of why it happened. On a fine summer evening, a Sailor had dinner with friends in town, where he had 2 beers. He and his buds then hit a local bar where he had 2 vodkas, 1 beer, and 1 piña colada. They walked for a bit and stopped at a beach bar where he had 1 beer, then walked to another bar where he had 2 more vodkas. The whole gang returned to base and checked in from liberty around 0100. Apparently, 9 drinks weren’t enough for our hero (*victim*) because went back out alone to the last bar they had visited. Without witnesses, the rest of the story (*and his memory*) is hazy. At some point on his solo run, he tried to take an electric scooter somewhere (*we don’t know where, and after that many drinks, he probably didn’t know either*). What we do know is that he lost control (*big surprise*), wiped out and “fractured his orbital wall” (*broke his eye socket*) and partially amputated his ear. He needed surgery to repair the injuries. —*Let’s do the math together: (9+x) drinks + 1 scooter = -1 ears. If you drink and ride an e-scooter, you’ll look like Vincent Van Gogh (if you don’t remember him from school, look him up). Don’t drink and scooter.*

- *A Midsummer Night’s Dream. (it’s Shakespeare).* On a lovely summer night, a little before 2300, a chief petty officer was riding a “lime green rented scooter” (*a very precise report, in case the scooter color was a factor*) with friends on a paved trail. When he tried to avoid a speed bump, he “lost control and fell off the scooter at 15 MPH.” Thankfully, the pavement broke his fall (*no, he was not thankful*). He had multiple injuries to his left arm and side. —*The report investigator’s conclusions were deep and insightful (that is sarcasm), determining the causal factor of the injury was “The SVM falling off of rented scooter and impacting pavement.” While the chief did indeed rent a scooter and did fall off, the report observations skip the obvious factors of darkness, a lack of PPE, and excessive speed. If you’re going to take the risk of riding, even more so at night, mitigate the risk with protective gear (knee and elbow pads, wrist protection, and—above all—a Helmet) and slow it down.*

E-Scooter Mishaps

- “Wow, That Car Almost Caused an Accide--...” Quoting the report, a Sailor “was riding a scooter and saw a car run a red light. While watching the car, he hit the curb and then a light pole.” The report says he had “multiple body injuries” (knee, wrist, shoulder, etc.). Nothing was broken, but it was enough to warrant 14 days of light duty. —*To put it in aviator terms, it seems like he had a “breakdown in his scan.” He saw the car run through the light but fixated and turned a blind eye to the curb and light pole. If you’re going to ride one of these infernal contraptions, keep your head and eyes moving. Anything moving can hit you, and anything not moving, you can hit.*

- “Why Did the Scooter Cross the Road?” *It doesn’t matter; it never got there.* A Sailor was riding a motorized scooter downtown. When he tried to cross the road, a wheel got stuck in the trolley lines in the pavement, throwing the Sailor off. He went to medical and was ordered to two days sick in quarters and seven days light duty to recover from his shoulder injury. —*Just about anything can take out those small scooter wheels: pebbles, pavement cracks, trolley tracks. We suggest walking or a bicycle.*



- Rapunzel. On a summer morning, a Marine rented an e-scooter to get around town for liberty. The report says while riding the scooter, the Marine’s vision “was blocked by their hair” (*we will guess it was not a male Marine since they rarely have enough hair to comb, let alone block their vision*). While going about 12 MPH, she let go of the handlebars with one hand to unblock her vision. As soon as she let go, she lost her balance, wiped out and broke her left arm. She broke it bad enough to require surgery and 90 days of limited duty and therapy. —*You know what else will keep the hair out of your face? A helmet. In this case, wearing the helmet would have even prevented the crash. Wear one or don’t ride.*

- Did it Say “Mother”? A Marine went downtown for a tattoo around 2100. The report doesn’t tell us what the tattoo was, but afterwards, he “spontaneously decided to rent a scooter.” Assuming the tattoo took a little bit of time, it was probably 2300 or so when he “experienced a loss of control and fell” while zipping down the sidewalk. He was injured sufficiently to recognize he needed medical attention (*good decision*), so he recovered the scooter and drove himself on the scooter (*maybe less good*) to the nearest hospital. Scrapes, bruises and an evaluation for a traumatic brain injury (*nope, no helmet*). Six days sick in quarters and a follow-up medical reevaluation. —*Tattoos don’t look good when covered in road rash. Please take any other mode of transportation. If you’re going to ride, wear a helmet.*

- helmet, Helmet, HELMET! While operating an e-scooter, a Navy officer braked improperly and fell from the scooter. He struck his head on the pavement, fracturing his skull and receiving a subdural hematoma. The report doesn’t mention the number of days, but he was hospitalized and on extended restricted duty. —*The report has scant details, but one stands out glaringly: No helmet. Please, folks, wear one! It is frighteningly easy to crack your skull open. Help us, help you.*

Key Takeaways

After reading the painful, real-life lessons, we’ll let you answer the questions to make your own Key Takeaways to remember.

1. Is the scooter really going to be the fastest way to get me where I’m going?

-Don’t forget to factor in the waiting time in the emergency room and on limited duty to heal.

2. Should I drink and scooter? (alternate question: How many ears would I like to keep?)

-We can’t tell you what to choose, but we vote for “No” and “2 ears.”

3. Hmm. Shall I ride-share, walk, or scooter home at night?

-We’re figuring you know the correct answer. The question is, will you make the right choice in the moment? We really hope you will.

4. Am I going to wear a helmet? Or am I NOT going to scooter?

-Choose wisely, young Jedi.

Remember, as Yoda would say - “Careful out there, let us be”