



# TACKLING NAVAL ENTERPRISE UNDERREPORTING



*Safety is not a department, it is a responsibility borne by every Sailor, Marine and leader.  
- ADM Michael Gilday, Chief of Naval Operations*

**TCFB**

The naval enterprise, through efforts of the Naval Safety Command, has made significant progress in identifying shortfalls in its overall safety program. All individuals, regardless of rank and position, must aspire and work toward a culture of procedural compliance and full reporting of data. Remember – “safety is operational readiness.”

- Thorough, accurate, and timely reporting of safety mishaps ethically embodies our Navy’s profession of arms.
- The Navy must foster a safety culture of excellence that encourages risk management, problem solving and proactive thinking.
- Engaged and committed Navy leaders shall empower Sailors to think critically about safety.
- Predictive data derived from mishap reports shall be at the center of decision making to transform how the Navy fights, maintains readiness, and conducts business operations.
- Mishap reports and near-mishap hazard reports are designed to provide Navy leadership with vital information needed to develop effective preventative measures that can eliminate or reduce future mishaps. Without full reporting of required data, proper depiction and effectiveness cannot occur.

## ☀ PRIVATE SECTOR TAKEAWAYS ☀

### **SIMPLE, STRAIGHTFORWARD REPORTING SYSTEMS**

In many cases, private sector use of mobile technology gives them a clear advantage in this area. That said, there are still some smaller companies in the private sector (80% of companies in America employ less than 20 people) that don’t track mishaps, hazards, near misses on anything other than paper, if at all.

### **VISIBLE, POSITIVE ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSES TO MISHAP AND HAZARD REPORTS**

This depends largely on location. The Navy’s financial shortfalls in FSRM are well known, and as a result, reports of low level (RAC 4 and 5) hazards can go unabated for years. There are areas within the Navy where there is immediate and thorough management and organizational response to hazards and near-miss reports. Nationally award-winning companies have exceptional hazard abatement programs, while others have similar financial struggles that preclude them from getting after every hazard report.

### **INDEMNITY AGAINST DISCIPLINARY ACTION AND ANONYMOUS REPORTING**

From what is formally reported or evidenced in IG reports or Hotline Complaints, or what members of the Board of Correction of Naval Records may observe, the naval enterprise appears better at encouraging reporting, especially anonymously, without fear of (or manifestation of) disciplinary action. Stigma or hesitancy remains, but there are far less reports of discipline or adverse personnel action resulting from a hazard or near-miss report. Naval aviation and the Navy weight handling program excel at hazard reporting.

### **FACT-FINDING, FOCUSED ON LEARNING, SHARING INVESTIGATIONS**

This is a bit of a mixed bag as well, but the Navy’s ability to offer safety privilege in response to the most significant mishaps helps increase the likelihood of reporting. Our experiences with the private sector have them almost on par, but there likely is a greater sense of trust in the armed services.

- “ OSHA found recordkeeping violations in close to half of all facilities inspected. Employee interviews identified workers' fear of reprisal and employer disciplinary programs as the most important causes of underreporting (Fagan & Hodson, 2016).
- “ Underreporting was higher in working environments with poorer organizational safety climate or where supervisor safety enforcement was inconsistent (Probst & Estrado, 2009).
- “ Nevertheless, the data indicates that underreporting is an all-too prevalent phenomenon. The vast majority of accidents and injuries go unreported in organizations today and the current study suggests organizational production pressure may partially explain this underreporting (Probst & Graso, 2013).
- “ Respondents provided 10 reasons for avoiding reporting lost-time injuries, with perceived low severity of the injury, negative reactions of others, and ambiguity about whether work caused the injury as the most common ones (Tucker, 2014).
- “ But a major cause of underreporting, according to experts, is OSHA’s reliance on self-reporting by employers. Employers have strong incentives to underreport injuries and illnesses that occur on the job (U.S. House of Representatives, 2008).



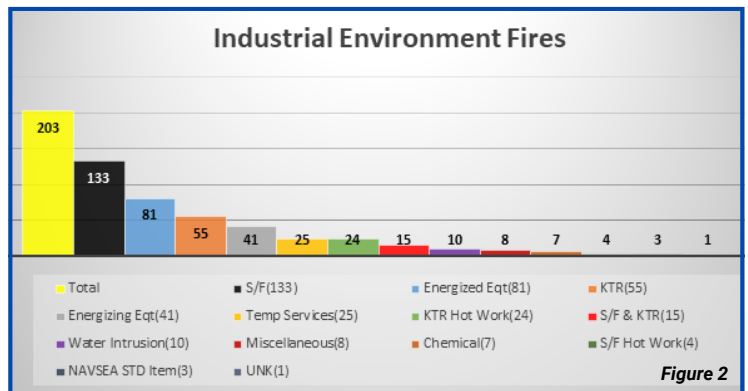
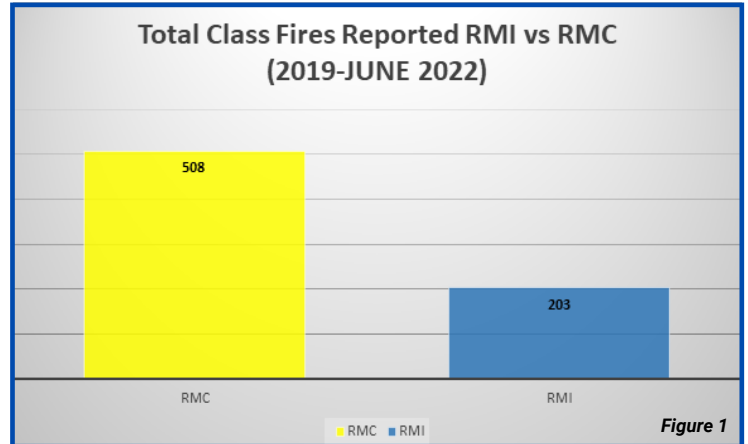
## WHY THE DIFFERENCE?

Figure 1 compares total number of fires reported in a Naval Sea Systems Regional Maintenance Center (NAVSEA RMC) brief regarding reported fire metrics (August 2022) **versus** what NAVSAFECOM pulled from RMI, highlighting the underreporting challenge (508 versus 203).

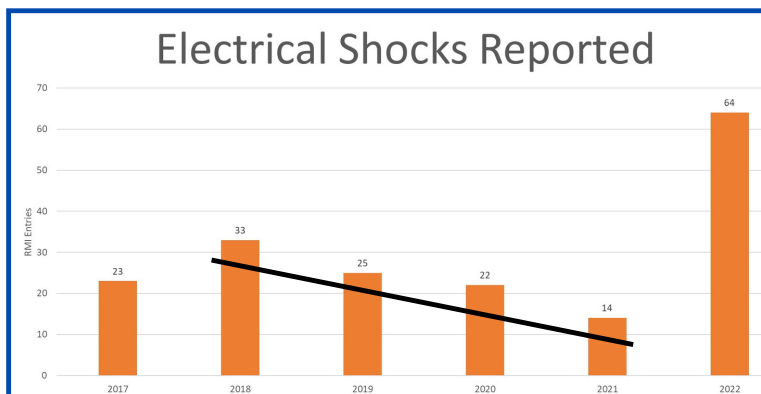
Figure 2 is a preliminary breakdown of RMI reported industrial fires by causal factor.

The following points were extracted from the NAVSEA RMC brief:

- Reported fires are representation of actual industrial fires.
- Changes to fire safety post-Bonhomme Richard fire have been positive.
- Additional personnel on deck plate are increasing number of fires reported.
- Class CHARLIE fires are largest group of fires reported.
- Class ALPHA fires have decreased.
- Suggests fire prevention efforts are making a difference.
- RMCs are not consistent in reporting fires.
- RMC fire reporting process is not stable, preventing accurate predictions of the process.
- But ... useful information can be obtained from the data.



### What NAVSAFECOM saw in RMI



### What TYCOM saw and said (June 22)

FM COMNAVSURFOR SAN DIEGO CA  
TO ALNAVSURFOR

...  
SUBJ/PERSONAL FOR COMMANDERS, COMMANDING OFFICERS, OFFICERS-IN CHARGE  
--ELECTRICAL SAFETY.//

...  
GENTEXT/REMARKS/1. From September 2021 to March 2022 there were more than 50 reported electric shocks across the Surface Force. The common factor was a failure to adhere to Force Electrical Safety Program requirements...

**NAVSAFECOM HEARD YOU!** Ships had poor connectivity to RMI and as a result, we are conducting a Quality of Service (QoS) evaluation. Feedback from fleet safety officers states that the elevation of QoS for RMI is received well in the Fleet and fixing many connectivity issues.

#### References for Quotes:

Fagan, K. & Hodgson, M. (2016). Underreporting of work-related injuries and illnesses: An OSHA priority. *Journal of Safety Research*, 60 (2017), 79-83.

Probst, T. & Estrado, A. (2009). Accident underreporting among employees: Testing the moderating influence of psychological safety climate and supervisor enforcement of safety practices. *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, 42 (2010), 1438-1444.

Probst, T. & Graso, M. (2013). Pressure to produce = pressure to reduce accident reporting? *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 59, (2013), 580-587.

Tucker, S. et al. (2014). Work-related injury underreporting among young workers: Gender differences, and explanations for underreporting. *Journal of Safety Research*, 50 (2014), 67-73.

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor (2008). Hidden tragedy: Underreporting of workplace injuries and illnesses. (turn over)