



Naval Safety Center

LESSONS LEARNED



LL 20-04

DISTRACTED WALKING

Distracted driving is a well-known safety concern in our country, with cell phones the likely main culprit. We've all seen it; drivers looking down at their phone, putting on makeup, reading, etc. As we begin the second decade of the 21st century, distracted *walking* joins the conversation as a relatively new issue. A quick search of your favorite online video feed will show the woman falling into the fountain while looking at her cell phone or the guy who walks into the street sign. Humorous, yes, but according to the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), 7,450 pedestrians died in traffic or non-traffic incidents in 2018 (non-traffic being incidents occurring in parking lots, driveways, etc.). It is not certain how many of those pedestrians were distracted while walking, but the number of fatalities continues to rise each year (*coincidentally, the rise began in 2007, the same year the first iPhone was introduced*). And it's not only texting while walking that's a problem. Checking email, playing games, dogs, bats (yes, "bats"; *more on those in a bit*) all contribute to the problem of distracted walking. What's more, as our database suggests, distracted walking doesn't only occur in traffic. While human versus car usually has the most disastrous results, our Navy and Marine brethren who fessed up to being distracted while walking, injured themselves and lost days of work that would have been prevented if they focused on the task of just walking. So please read and learn from our "WESS-destrians" and their head knocks and ankle twists so you can stay "ready" and injury free.



- A Marine got distracted by a conversation with a fellow Marine, became unaware of his surroundings, and walked into the boom of a crane. According to the report he "busted his head slightly open" in the process. — *We're not sure what the Marine Corps definition of "busted slightly open" is, but he was treated at the emergency room for an unknown size laceration and received no lost work days or light duty. Oorah!*



- On his way to physical training, a Sailor was distracted by what he thought was a bat flying. Seaman Ace Ventura continued walking while looking up at the bat (*presumably attempting to avoid any contact with the vermin*). At some point during his encounter with the bat (AKA "Shikaka") the Sailor tripped on a raised portion of the sidewalk, fell, and hit his head on the concrete. — *The report doesn't detail the extent of the Sailor's head injury, but his account of the incident may have included a description of the bat's "lifeless, beady eyes, clawed feet, and huge grotesque wings...even fangs!"*

- A Sailor was running on a treadmill (*yes, this is going to end badly*). She was wearing headphones with a "really long cord" according to the report. As she began to adjust the cord, she didn't realize that she was drifting back on the treadmill belt. Eventually losing her balance and tripping, the Sailor fell and was launched from the treadmill into the bulkhead, but not before receiving a "belt rash" on the way. — *The report recommends to "pause the treadmill and then adjust your audio equipment." We are inclined (treadmill pun not intended) to agree.*

DISTRACTED WALKING

- A Sailor decided to go for a jog early one morning (*a great start to the day, right?*). Now, enter the dog walker. Somewhere along the run, our Sailor became distracted by a pedestrian walking their dog in her path. The report doesn't detail exactly what the dog did, but it was enough to cause her to trip and fall on the street, suffering a neck sprain and abrasions to her palms and legs. She completed her run ("*no pain, no gain*") and initially felt okay, but had to be treated at medical the next day. — *She had no lost days of work, but had one "ruff" morning. (Apologies. We couldn't resist that one).*

- A Marine was walking from his vehicle to his residence. It sounds simple enough, but during the brief walk, a cat crossed the Marine's path, distracting him. The report doesn't specify if the cat was black, but our Marine's bad luck set in immediately. He tripped over the curb, fell, and broke his left hand, earning him a trip to the emergency room and 30 days on light duty. — *Nautical lore holds that black cats on ships actually bring good luck, but if a cat approaches you and turns around, it takes your luck with it. Either way, we recommend making your own luck by keeping your eyes on the path in front of you.*

- On a dark and stormy night (*no not the drink...well, who knows*), a Sailor was on his way back from liberty. With darkness and rain being the first two strikes against our unfortunate pedestrian, number three was his cell phone. While distracted on the phone, he tripped, fell, hit his head on the road and received a laceration above his eye. — *Walking in dark, in inclement weather is challenging enough, you don't need to be texting while walking for a number of reasons...your own protection, for starters.*



- While walking through the ship's berthing area with shower shoes on, a Sailor tried to answer his cell phone and kicked a column, injuring his right foot's "ring toe" according to the report (*the anatomical term is the number four phalanx, but we get it, and we know how much it hurts. At least the report writer didn't use the term "the little piggy who had none"*). Our Sailor's urgency to answer the phone while flip-flopping through berthing cost him a few days light duty until he could fit his foot back in his shoe. — *Walk now, text later. Especially if you are wearing shower shoes.*

Key Takeaways

1. **Time Critical Risk Management (TCRM) doesn't need to be a major evolution.** Experts say we make upwards of 35,000 decisions per day, so whether it's a life and death matter, or "Do I really need to be on the phone right now?", it only takes a second to make the right "call" (*get it?*).

2. **It's not multitasking, it's distracted [fill in the blank...driving, walking, riding].** As this lesson demonstrated, the types of hazards that await you far exceed the distraction of cell phones. Keep your wits about you at all times and be mindful of the risks of "multitasking." We may not be able to avoid all potential hazards and distractions, but the better we become at managing the risks around us, the "luckier" we get.

This product is posted on the NAVSAFECEN CAC-enabled website at <https://intelshare.intelink.gov/sites/navsafe>.

Send feedback to: NAVSAFECEN_CODE522_LESSONS_LEARNED@navy.mil

And remember, "Let's be careful out there"