



# Naval Safety Command

## **SAFETY AWARENESS DISPATCH** (formerly "Lesson Learned")



SA 22-10

### ***WE KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER***

Note: This dispatch complements the Naval Safety Command's 2022 summer safety campaign: The 101 Critical Days of Summer. You can find this year's presentation on our public website at <https://navalsafetycommand.navy.mil/> in the Stand Down section.

Summer is nearly upon us. As the days grow longer, the temps rise, and we emerge from social restrictions, it's time for all things fun in the sun — and the risks and hazards that accompany them. Whether you're heading to the boat ramp, the beach, milling about in your backyard, or [fill in your summer activity here], the laws of physics or the need for risk management don't simply disappear when you're off duty. As our title suggests, we know hazards and risky behavior exist because we see plenty of examples in our database. Here are a few examples to read and think about, so you can avoid a similar painful or even tragic outcome.



- **A Day At the Park.** A Marine was enjoying a well-deserved day off at the local water park. He even applied sunscreen every hour — only he didn't use water-resistant sunscreen...at the water park. The report doesn't detail how long he floated down the lazy river or how many times he hit the "Slidezilla," but the next day, he went to the emergency room with blisters on his shoulders from sunburn and received two days sick in quarters. There are plenty of sunscreen brands with a multitude of sun protection factors out there to choose from, but choose wisely. — *When you or your family members are going to be in the water, make sure your sunscreen is water-resistant (Note: there is no waterproof sunscreen according to the Federal Drug Administration). Reapply at least every hour as our Marine did because even the water-resistant kind will lose its effectiveness in the water over time.*

- **Thanks For The Heads Up.** A Sailor was riding in a boat (*standing up*), going approximately 30-40 mph. The driver made an abrupt turn causing the Sailor to be ejected from the boat. He climbed back aboard, "but had no complaints," according to the report. We can think of one complaint. How about, "let a shipmate know when you're making a power turn!" On the first day of work after the mishap, the Sailor felt pain in his neck. His supervisor sent him to medical, where he was diagnosed with a severe neck sprain. — *This mishap could have turned out much worse for our slung-overboard Sailor. We've covered this scenario in our on-duty Lesson Learned LL 19-27 Small Boat Mishaps. There should be no surprises. Everyone on board should know before a maneuver is about to happen.*



- **"I'm The King of The World..."** A Sailor was standing in the front of a pontoon boat. As the boat operator slowed the boat to enter a no-wake zone, the Sailor lost his balance and fell into the water directly in front of the boat. As he floated under the boat between the pontoons, the propeller struck the Sailor's head and shoulders, causing severe lacerations. The Sailor was treated at the local hospital for his wounds and a concussion and is lucky to be alive today. — *Bow riding is not a good idea in any type of boat unless there is specific seating or you're behind guard rails. It's also*

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illegal in many states and on federal waters — and for the obvious reason we just described. Know the rules and adhere to our “no surprises” takeaway from our last story.

- They're Not Toys. A Sailor was riding Jet Skis with a friend. While the Sailor was making waves with his ski, his friend was jumping them. Sounds fun, right? Well, it was all fun and games until the Sailor fell off his Jet Ski and his friend ran into him, striking him in the head and knocking him unconscious. The friend took the Sailor to shore and called 911. At the local emergency room, the Sailor was found to have a skull fracture. — *Jumping wakes on Jet Skis (especially near each other) is akin to trick-riding on a motorcycle; they're a mishap waiting to happen.*



- A High Price. A Marine was attending a house party (and consuming alcohol). After drinking for four and a half hours, the Marine observed his friends jumping from the 20-foot-high balcony and decided it was his turn (NO!) How many times have you heard this scenario? The unsurprising outcome was that he dove headfirst into four feet of water, fracturing two thoracic vertebrae. He was paralyzed from the chest down, resulting in permanent total disability. — *This mishap is not only a lesson in alcohol-induced bad decision making, it's a lesson in responsibility, or lack thereof. The other balcony jumpers are lucky they didn't break a leg, and no one at the party had the presence of mind to break the dumb-idea chain. Unfortunately, the consequences were severe and life-changing in this "lesson not learned." Balcony jumping aside, not drinking in excess will go a long way toward preventing unnecessary and sometimes permanent injury, or worse.*



- What Goes Up. A Navy pilot was mountain bike riding in a bike park. On his 15th run down the mountain, the aviator attempted to ride a C-wall (a C-shaped vertical wall of five-foot-high wood). Traveling at a speed over 23 mph, he made his entry to the wall turn. Rather than staying on the wall, the aviator shot off the top and kept going. After launching approximately two feet above the five-foot-high wall, it was time to return to earth. As always, gravity worked like a charm, and he crash-landed on his side, fracturing several ribs, bruising his shoulder, and fracturing his left pinky finger. — *While it took 14 successful runs to make the wrong decision, our Maverick of the mountain hit the*

*afterburners and instantly regretted it. He acknowledged his speed was in excess of his skill level for the wall ride, and we agree. You won't always have a Landing Signals Officer to wave you off, and there's no ejection seat on a mountain bike.*

- It's All Downhill From Here. In another summertime wheeled incident involving excessive speed, a Sailor was skateboarding and, quoting from the report, “did not accurately assess the likelihood / severity of a fall when encountering an increasingly steep decline.” Simply put, he went too fast down a hill. As with our previous speeding serviceman (*minus the wall*), this speed-skateboarding Sailor realized he exceeded his skill level all too late, lost control, and fell, spraining his ankle and receiving bruises and lacerations on both forearms. — *We're sure he'd rather have been able to return to work injury-free than spend seven days on light duty in pain. As with our previous story, slow it down on those hills.*

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- Danger Is My Middle Name. A Sailor was snorkeling at a local beach. When it was time to exit the water, he opted for the fins-on method like the Austin Powers II beach scene. Seaman Powers fin-walked his way out onto the rocky beach for a short distance, then the inevitable happened. He tripped on one of his fins and fell face-first onto the rocks, lacerating his forehead just above his eyebrow and bruising his knee. — *Ten stitches and 14 days on light duty later, our “Sailor of mystery” probably wondered how Michael Myers made it look so easy. Whatever your water sport or activity this summer, think through your entry and exit before you start, lest you end up face down on the rocks.*



- Pulling A Hammy. A group of Marines was playing a Wiffle ball game in, we'll say, a very hot, arid location. While it may or may not have been a factor, the temperature was “well over 100 degrees Fahrenheit,” according to the report. Approximately 90 minutes into the game, one of the Marines injured a hamstring muscle while sprinting to base, but the report was mum on whether it was a strain or a cramp. Nevertheless, he was out for the remainder of the game, but wasn't placed on light duty (Oorah!). — *As for playing Wiffle ball during black-flag heat conditions (temperature 90 degrees or above) where “strenuous” exercise should be suspended, the Marines held a pre-game brief about the conditions and made the call to proceed with the game. At any temperature, hydrating before and during a sports event, and proper warming up can pay dividends in the long “run.” See what we did there?*



- Life Saving Decision. A Sailor observed a child being pulled out to open water by a rip current. He immediately dove into the water, swam out, and placed the child on his back. During the swim back to shore, the Sailor dislocated his shoulder, but continued swimming. Once safely ashore with the child, two nurses assessed the Sailor and reset his shoulder. The child was fine, as was our lifesaving Sailor, who required no treatment other than 14 days of well-deserved light duty and possible future shoulder surgery — *A small price to pay for this Sailor's selfless action. While he made the right decision based on his confidence in his swimming skills, the lesson here is that rip currents are no joke, and they can get the best of adult swimmers as well as kids. Learn how to detect rip currents and dangerous surf and heed all posted warning signs. Read more about rip currents and dangerous surf from the National Weather Service here: <https://www.weather.gov/safety/ripcurrent-surviving>*

- Fence VS E-scooter. A Sailor was riding an Electric Scooter (e-scooter) in town on the sidewalk (*Lesson #1: Don't ride e-scooters on the sidewalk*). During his sidewalk scooting, the Sailor turned his head and “didn't see the fence approaching,” (*it's shocking how fast those fences can move...*) according to the report (*Lesson #2: Don't take your eyes off the road*). When it became apparent that the fence wasn't yielding, the Sailor raised his right arm to block the assault (*Lesson #3: The brake works better than your arm*). The impact resulted in a bruised right wrist and earned this sidewalk-scooting Sailor seven days on light duty. — *We have so many examples of e-scootering gone wrong that the topic warrants its own Safety Awareness Dispatch. Note: We've done three already. Stay tuned for the 4th edition.*

- Going Out On A Limb. One summer weekend, a Sailor decided to cut back some branches from a tree in the yard after his spouse left for work. In the absence of adult supervision, the Sailor used a



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step ladder to climb into the tree and began trimming branches with manual pruning sheers about eight feet above the ground. As seen in hundreds of social media videos, a branch that was supporting the Sailor gave way, and down he went. Showing remarkable presence of mind (*and we use that term lightly*), the Sailor tossed the pruning sheers safely out of the way as he headed for the ground and an unknown fate. — *Fortunately for our unlicensed tree surgeon, the branch was the only broken limb that day. He broke the fall with his face, receiving only a black eye. Please stay on the ladder and make sure it's stable. And please don't use step ladders like extension ladders by leaning them on trees or buildings.*



- The All-Too-familiar Gasoline-On-Bonfire Story. We've told stories like this next one so many times, we ran out of subtitles for it. In this edition of "Don't use gasoline as a fire starter," a Marine and his buddies gathered for a bonfire at 2200. When the Marine went to get something to light the fire, his "buddy" doused the firewood with gasoline. We can imagine the surprise and shock when the Marine lit the bonfire and FOOM! Quoting from the report, after the FOOM! "I went inside to inspect my face...I asked my friends to take me to the hospital." The Marine suffered first and second-degree burns to his face. The report also noted, "there was a lack of knowledge and maturity," and we agree. — *We wish this was the last time we'd need to say, "Don't use gasoline to start fires!" Please help us achieve that goal. And that goes for grilling too.*

- Why? While we sometimes try to find a bit of humor in the poor decisions made by our fellow Sailors and Marines in hopes that readers will remember the story, think, and take action to avoid the same mistake, this example is anything but funny. A Marine was home on leave to see his family. At a local park, the Marine rented a kayak, disclosing to the park employees that he was not a good swimmer. The employees advised him to wear a life jacket, but he refused. Approximately 100 yards into the lake, the Marine's kayak capsized, and he was seen screaming for help. Before assistance could arrive, the Marine submerged and never resurfaced. His body was found the next day by a local fire and rescue team. — *The Marine's decision not to wear a life jacket will forever remain a mystery. We share this tragic story, and the previous examples, so others will remember, stop, and think. In this case, it is about acknowledging the risks around you, knowing your skill level, and wearing appropriate PPE. Please remember this and all our examples of summer mishaps, and take care of yourselves.*

### Key Takeaways

We hope you take some well-deserved time off to enjoy your favorite summer activities. With thoughtful planning and consideration of the hazards around you, this summer can be mishap-free. Here are a few takeaways to complement the 101 Critical Days of Summer presentation noted on page one.

1. **Plan, don't just do.** Whether you're getting some needed yard work done, heading out on the boat or spending a day at the beach, plan ahead. Think through the activity and remember those who've failed before you. Check the weather, surf, your safety gear, PPE, and consider potential hazards along the way. You may not have performed the particular activity since last summer, so don't assume you've "got it down."
2. **Bad decisions can ruin a good time – and possibly your life.** Taking unnecessary risks will most often make you a warning to others about what not to do. The purpose of our Safety Awareness products is for you to read and learn, rather than be a contributor to others learning later. Help make our job obsolete, we'll find something else to do.
3. **Be responsible.** Many of the mishaps in our database were influenced by excessive use of alcohol. Having a few drinks with friends and family doesn't need to continue until your decision-making abilities cease to exist. That's asking for trouble.