



NAVAL SAFETY COMMAND

SAFETY AWARENESS DISPATCH



SA 23-16

E-Scooter Mishaps

Episode V – “The E-scooter Strikes Back”

Warm weather is returning, pollen is in the air, and e-scooters are getting back on the road (*and in the ditch*). To fend off the inevitable next step—*Sailors and Marines in the emergency room (ER)*—here are some real-world stories to read and remember.

“Houston, we have a problem.” This statistic leaves us shaking our heads: ER visits in the U.S. due to e-scooters have jumped **450%** in the past five years of data (from 7,700 in year 1 to 42,200 in year 5)¹. — *And we thought the 329% increase last year was bad!* Typically, accident stats vary up and down from year to year, but e-scooter stats don’t vary—they only get worse. Multiple studies agree that e-scooter injury rates are even worse than motorcycles.²



The year-after-year increase tells us something is wrong, and Navy and Marine Corps numbers agree. E-scooters may seem like an easy way to get somewhere faster, but you should have a little healthy fear. If you do, it’ll help you live longer and with less pain. For yet another year, we found more Navy and Marine Corps scooter examples in FY-22 than we could use. The list keeps piling up! Here are some recent examples of people who no longer think e-scooters are a good idea. Please take their lessons for yourself. They’d tell you, “It’s better to read and learn than to bleed and learn.”

- **“If I Can’t See It, It Won’t Hurt Me.”** A Sailor was riding a rental e-scooter on the sidewalk at night in her neighborhood. Just before midnight, she drove over a slick, oily substance that had leaked or spilled on the sidewalk, lost control and impacted the ground. A relative drove her to the hospital. She fractured her leg badly enough (both major bones) to require surgery and 48 days of restricted duty. — *The darkness and high speeds meant she couldn’t see the slick spot on the sidewalk, which caused the wreck. This mishap shows how simple risk management (RM) really is. If she had considered the risks (“Hmm. Since it’s dark out, going fast on a scooter means I won’t be able to see things that can make me crash. And with no protective gear on, that’s going to hurt. Maybe I shouldn’t ride right now.”). That’s as complicated as RM needs to be. It’s not a checklist: it’s a way of thinking things through. Please try it out.*
- **Sword and Magic Helmet.** While on liberty, a Marine Officer had an accident while riding an e-scooter. During routine operations (*no obstacles, traffic or potholes*), he lost control of the scooter, fell off and struck his head and face on the pavement. He was transported to the hospital via ambulance and treated for multiple lacerations to his face, a facial fracture and a concussion. No helmet (SMH). No surgery was needed, but the surgeon recommended three days restricted duty and six weeks of “natural healing” to recover. — *Please...Wear a \$^*(#@ Helmet! E-scooters will get you, even without potholes, pebbles or obstacles. Pick one of two options: 1) Don’t ride them, or 2) Wear a helmet and other PPE.*
- **At Least the Safety Officer Read the Previous E-Scooter Lessons.** This report was a simple summary: “Sailor riding electric scooter. Sailor hit curb of sidewalk and fell off of scooter. Sailor was wearing PPE as required. Sailor sought medical care. Sailor was treated and released with first aid care and over-the-counter pain meds.” — *Key point (phrased in the same style as the report): ‘Sailor was wearing PPE, so Sailor had only minimal injury.’ Notably, in the report’s conclusions and findings, the writer quoted sentences directly from our previous e-scooter lessons learned and SA dispatches. We’re glad she read them. Since the Sailor was wearing PPE, we think he read them too. Keep reading and heeding!*

¹Consumer Product Safety Commission report; Sep 2022.

²University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) study; Apr 2022

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- **Is Faster Really Faster?** After eating dinner off base, a Sailor was returning to his ship. The report states he “decided to use an electric scooter to travel faster” and hit a pothole on the road. He tried to catch himself as he fell, breaking his left arm. One day in the hospital, surgery, cast, 30 days convalescent leave and 30 days light duty. — *We'll let you be the judge. Was the scooter a faster trip back to the ship or not?*



- **Prepared.** A Sailor was riding an e-scooter to work in the morning. As he drove through an intersection with a green light, a car coming the opposite way turned left in front of him, causing him to t-bone it at approximately 25-30 mph. Witnesses called 911 and medics took the Sailor to the emergency room. They released him around noon the same day with a minor concussion. No lost time. Why was he OK? Because he was wearing full safety gear – a full-face helmet, gloves, over-the-ankle boots, pants, and a long sleeve shirt. — *Outstanding decision by this Sailor to wear PPE. Sometimes a crash is not your fault, but this high-speed scooter crash shows that the proper safety gear can make all the difference. Please wear it.*

- **Unprepared.** A Senior Sailor was riding an e-scooter at night (*strike 1*) without a helmet or other PPE (*strike 2*). He reportedly was sober, but sobriety wasn't enough to prevent the *strikeout (hmm. maybe riding an e-scooter is already strike 1)*. The Sailor came around a corner and crashed due to a pothole, hitting his head on the ground. He didn't go to medical, though. He just went home. Throbbing headaches the next day convinced him to go to the local hospital. Once the medical staff saw him, they whisked him via ambulance to a higher-level hospital's neurological ICU. Why? Because he had a broken skull and brain bleeding. As you can imagine, the hospital kept him for a bit. — *Two simple choices, everyone. You must pick one. Either 1) Don't ride a scooter, or 2) Wear a helmet.*

- **The Long Way Back.** An officer was riding an e-scooter from a restaurant to his apartment in the afternoon. He hit a bump in the road, fell forward over the handlebars, and landed on the street, hitting his face and left shoulder. The report says he “walked the rest of his way to his apartment.” He was “unsure of how far it was” (*possibly due to his head injuries*). After a long, bloody walk home (*he must've looked frightening—why did no one stop to help?*), he realized he was badly injured and called a friend to take him to the emergency room. Twenty-six stitches above his eye, three days sick in quarters, and nine days light duty — *Let us take stock: Helmet? No. Major facial laceration, broken facial bones & facial road rash? Yes. Would you make the same choice? Perhaps it would be best to just walk from the outset and skip the blood and drama.*

Key Takeaways

For a change of pace, after reading the painful, real-life lessons, we'll let you answer the questions to make your own Key Takeaways.

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 time lying on the ground bleeding and the trip to the hospital.

2. Which example would I rather be: “Prepared” or “Unprepared?”

-We can't tell you what to think, but between “broken skull/brain bleed” or not, we choose “Not.”

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, “Let's be careful out there”