

## Naval Safety Center *LESSONS LEARNED*



I.I. 19**-**24

## JUDGMENT DAY

"Before I do anything, I ask myself, 'Would an idiot do that?' and if the answer is yes, I do not do that thing." — Dwight Schrute, The Office TV series

In this lesson, we've compiled some of the more colorful examples of how a lapse in judgment (or a conscious disregard for procedure) caused an undesired outcome for our fearless warriors. Looking back at FY 2018 data, we found that out of more than 4,680 mishaps, 2,425 of them were attributed to poor judgment, bad decisions, or disregard for the rules. That's nearly 52 percent of the total mishaps reported (Navy and Marine Corps, on and off duty) and didn't include auto accidents. It only takes a minute to consider the hazards and risks surrounding your next task or activity, and make the right choices. Unfortunately for the Sailors and Marines in the following examples, they missed those steps and earned bruises, stitches, and a dose of humility.

- While performing preventative maintenance on a vehicle, a Marine decided that it was a good idea to siphon fuel from the vehicle's gas tank. Lacking tools, he improvised (not wisely). In the process, the Marine ingested fuel, causing him to vomit. This decision earned him a trip to medical and three days on light duty. Our prediction is, if there isn't already a technical reference or a Marine Corps order on this procedure, it is coming soon, thanks to Lance Corporal MacGruber.
- Instead of waiting for a larger forklift to move equipment, four Sailors decided to use the one they had. One drove, and three brave souls held onto the back as counterweights. When they attempted to lift a shipping container weighing significantly more than the forklift's maximum lifting capacity...well, you know. When the forklift began to tilt forward with all riders on board, the operator slammed the forks down. The slamming saved the forklift and himself but launched his three human counterweights into the air. One Sailor landed on his head (in the grass) and was treated and released by medical personnel. Oh, if only there was security video of this! It would sure add some pep to the next safety stand down.



• A Sailor was at home on a Friday afternoon and had "a couple" of beers. His phone and his 9mm handgun were on the end table (raise your hand if you can see a hazard). When the phone rang he picked up the gun to move it, and — BANG! — it discharged into his left thigh. (Not wanting to make assumptions here, but handguns usually fire only when you pull the trigger). Thankfully, the Sailor was treated and released from the hospital with no major damage. — Helpful tip: The limit for consuming alcoholic beverages and picking up weapons is ZERO! Also, the best place for a loaded, chambered weapon with the safety off is pointed down-range at your target...not resting on the end table.



• During a foreign port call, a Sailor subjected himself to several hours of a tattoo session. When leaving the parlor, he missed a step...and fell. His liberty buddy helped him up, and there were (*supposedly*) no injuries, but the newly tatted Sailor exclaimed he "still felt nauseous." Two more steps down the sidewalk, and he passed out, falling face first onto the concrete (*OK*, *now there are injuries*). He woke up about 20 seconds later with a bloody lip and a shiner on his right eye, and his buddy took him to the emergency room. — *Aside from the safety and health risks of getting tattooed in a foreign land, having that entire "Order of the Dragon" tattooed on your back in one sitting isn't the wisest decision. Pace yourselves, shipmates. Pace yourselves.* 

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- Four communications Marines were tasked with replacing an ethernet cable in a supply warehouse. The supply Marines requested that they run the cable through the ceiling instead of across the floor. Challenge accepted! The team identified the hazard of falling through the ceiling, so they "wisely" chose the lightest Marine to do the high work (what could possibly go wrong?). He climbed the ladder, stepped off onto a ceiling tile, and...fell seven feet to the deck. He would have stuck the landing (flat on his back), but he lost points by bouncing off a desk on his way down. Luckily, this mission impossible scene reenactment resulted in no serious injuries and just one day of light duty for our "lightest" selectee. The report states that there was "a lack of leadership involved as well as a lack of knowledge." Well said. In the Marines' defense, they're more accustomed to entering a room through the big hole they make when they blow off the door. Oorah!
- A Sailor was attempting to remove a primer from a 105 mm artillery round before engraving it (presumably for some fine barracks décor). The Sailor was utilizing a hammer and punch (it makes me want to close my eyes as I read this). On the somewhat up-side, he did inspect the shell and believed the primer had already been discharged. However, when he struck the primer with the punch, he found his belief was misplaced. BAM! Yes, it discharged with a loud boom. We presume the powder and projectile were already removed as there were no injuries. Important safety tip (Thanks, Egon): The same method for making an artillery round go bang, shouldn't be used to remove the primer.



• A Sailor was transporting a damaged commode in a trash bag over his shoulder down four decks on the ship. As the Sailor was descending the last ladder of his journey, he lost his footing and slid down to the deck below. At some point during the toilet trip, he lost his grip on the trash bag, and the commode hit him in the head, causing a laceration. This Sailor's penalty for not applying proper ladder trailing hand technique: four stitches and seven days on limited duty. — Our recommendation; when asked about the scar, go with "It's a sword wound from repelling boarders." That's more believable than the toilet to the "head" story anyway (see what we did there?).

## **Lessons Learned**

- 1. It's easy to think, "I would never have done that," but more than 2,400 Sailors and Marines likely thought the same thing in 2018 right before they ended up in our database. More than half of the reported mishaps were the result of poor decisions somewhere along the way, and some were just flat out breaking the rules. Forklift operator or cable guy may not be your line of work, but we hope these stories will help you pause to spot what can bite you (and how to avoid it) at work and home.
- 2. One of the best ways to help reduce the risk of populating our lessons learned products is to look out for your shipmates and fellow Marines. In many cases, more than one person was present during the decision process. Team members should feel empowered to speak up and interrupt the error chain ("Friends don't let friends...[fill in the blank: fall through the ceiling, ride forklifts, drink, and e-scooter, etc.]). You don't have to be in a safety billet to provide safety leadership. One of the four core themes of the CNO's safety campaign is for all hands to "Be a safety leader." As we've heard said many times over the years, "Everyone is a safety officer." Go forth, and be one.

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

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