



Naval Safety Command

SAFETY AWARENESS DISPATCH



SA 22-11

E-SCOOTER MISHAPS IV

Episode IV – “A New Hope” [that you won’t ride them]

Spring has sprung, and along with the weeds, e-scooters are popping up again even more around town. We’ve fired off three preceding SA products (formerly Lessons Learned), and sadly, the broken jaws, fractured wrists, and busted eye sockets keep on coming.

We were tempted to skip the national stats and just get on with the learning, but this stat was un-skippable: Emergency Room (ER) visits in the U.S. due to e-scooters have jumped **329%** in the past four years (from 7,700 to 25,400)¹. Minor ups and downs from year to year are normal, but 300+% tells you there’s something wrong with this scenario! E-scooters may look easy to use and fun to ride, but apply a little healthy skepticism. It’ll help you live longer – or at least help you keep your teeth. We found more Navy and Marine Corps scooter examples in FY-21 than we could use. Here are some recent examples of people who learned these e-scooters might not be so simple.



- Tiny Wheels = Big Falls. An officer was using an electric scooter in downtown San Diego. He was traveling down a two-lane divided road and hit a bump/uneven surface. The scooter’s front wheel twisted and the officer flipped over the handlebars. The report then says “he lost consciousness,” but we suspect it wasn’t an airborne blackout from the exciting flight, rather, it was a knockout after hitting the ground. We base our suspicion on his need for an ambulance ride to the ER, facial surgery, two days in the hospital, and 10 days of restricted duty. — *The report says he was discharged “after successfully eating and walking without assistance.” Wow, if “eating without help” was a measurement of success, that must’ve been a hard impact. Wear a helmet. Tiny e-scooter wheels don’t take much to cause a wreck. Frankly, you’re better off with other modes of travel.*
- Sometimes it’s the potholes, sometimes it’s just a pot. At 1800, a Sailor was riding an electric scooter when “he became distracted” (*the report doesn’t say by what*) and “ran into a concrete flower pot.” He tried to brace for impact with the ground and broke his wrist and a couple of fingers. — *Broken wrists are common with e-scooters. Trying to break your fall is a healthy, human reaction and probably saved this particular Sailor (along with a bit of luck) from the head and facial injuries that also are frequent. Without wearing wrist protection, it’s almost inevitable you’ll eventually break your wrist. Don’t tempt fate. If you’re riding, wear a helmet and hand/wrist protection (adding kneepads and elbow pads would be even smarter).*
- Speaking of head and facial injuries. A Sailor lost control of an e-scooter and fell face-first onto the pavement. He lost consciousness and had visible face wounds. Bystanders witnessed the crash and called 911. Once at the hospital, he was diagnosed with facial fractures. He passed head and spinal tests (*whew!*), probably because – as the report noted – he wisely wore a helmet. — *We don’t know why he lost control, except that e-scooters are just plain hazardous. We discourage using them, but if you are going to, helmets are ESSENTIAL, and wrist, elbow, and knee protection are SMART.*
- The best place to ride a scooter? A Marine was “riding a scooter indoors,” slipped, and “hit his finger on the kitchen counter” as he fell. — *We don’t know if there is any good place to ride an e-scooter safely, but the kitchen isn’t it. One broken finger. Following the odd Marine trend, zero lost workdays.*

E-SCOOTER MISHAPS (Episode IV)

- If You Give a Mouse a Scooter. One night around 2300, a Sailor was riding a rented e-scooter on the sidewalk. Because he was riding on the sidewalk, he found it necessary to swerve off the sidewalk to avoid people who were walking (*it's in the name, "side-walk"*). Because he swerved off the sidewalk, he struck a trash can. Because he struck a trash can, he fell into the street. And because he fell into the street, a truck that was traveling down the same street ran over his right foot. Despite his best efforts otherwise, he only suffered minor contusions to his foot and five days of restricted duty (*one for each sore toe*). — *The report summary hits the main points well: "He should have been riding the scooter in the bike lane of the street, not on the sidewalk," thus avoiding pedestrians and trash cans. He also "was traveling...at an excessive speed," which didn't allow time to stop. Note to self: If you are going to do the wrong thing, doing it faster is even more wrong.*
- They're dangerous even standing still. An off-duty Sailor was walking to a restaurant in the dark at approximately 0500. While walking, he "attempted to use a rental electric scooter." He lost his balance "while mounting the scooter" – which was stationary – and fell to the ground. He impacted the pavement face-first, injuring his chin and fracturing his jaw. After a quick trip to the ER, he spent a long night in the hospital (*his day started at 0500*) before surgery the next day and 42 days of restricted duty. — *This face-plant is what happens if you can't break your fall with your hands (which usually leads to broken wrists), and it was at 0 mph. We've never read a scooter good-news story. The best you can hope for is to escape uninjured. The worst...well, you get the idea. We strongly suggest walking. Society was remarkably successful - and less injured - before rental e-scooters showed up.*
- "The only winning move is not to play." (*name that movie; it's a classic*) Sometimes you can do nearly everything right, but still face the consequences. On a sunny summer afternoon, a Sailor was riding an e-scooter in the bike lane (*good*). He saw a vehicle begin to pull out of a parking lot, so he slowed down (*great*). The vehicle came to a complete stop at the parking lot exit, so the Sailor continued to ride the electric scooter past where the vehicle was stopped (*logical decision-making*). Once he was in front of the vehicle, the driver accelerated from the parking lot and struck the Sailor, causing multiple contusions to his hip, arm, and torso. The injuries resulted in three days sick in quarters. — *You can do almost everything right, and still end up wrong. This accident was the car driver's fault, but it was the scooter rider who got hurt. If you are on a scooter, never assume a driver sees you and will do the right thing. The safest bet is to not ride the scooter. But if you insist, make sure you see the driver's eyes and that they see yours. If they didn't look at you and acknowledge your presence, you are a potential speed bump.*

Key Takeaways

The safest bet when it comes to e-scooters is "**Don't.**" But, if you're going to do it anyway, do it right. These four points can help you be as "right" as you can.

- 1. Wear a helmet.** Standing on scooters is way less stable than a bicycle, so riders are thrown forward with more force in a crash, leading to much higher rates of face and head injury. Wrist/hand protection would do you good too.
- 2. Day only, please.** The lights on e-scooters aren't very bright, and not all e-scooters have them. You can't avoid what you can't see. Just ride in the daytime. In some cities, riding them at night is prohibited (so know your local laws).
- 3. Tiny wheels = Big crashes.** Scooter wheels can't negotiate cracks and bumps like a bicycle tire. Even a small crack or pebble can take you out. This situation is a significant cause of mishaps.
- 4. Don't drink and scooter.** Sober people wipe out on them all the time. If you've had a couple of drinks, that scooter will hurt you. Walk or call a rideshare.

May the Force be with you — and remember, "Let's be careful out there"