



NAVAL SAFETY COMMAND SAFETY AWARENESS DISPATCH



SA 23-11

The "Summery" of Mishaps

Note: This dispatch complements the Naval Safety Command's 2023 summer safety campaign: 101 Critical Days of Summer. You can find this year's presentation in the stand-down section of our public website at <https://navalsafetycommand.navy.mil/>

In honor of the old weekly Summary of Mishaps messages, we bring you the "Summery" of mishaps (See *what we did there?*). As our title suggests, we've collected a few "summery" examples from our database as many of us transition to our favorite summer activities. There were many to choose from, with more than 540 mishaps occurring during last year's 101 critical days of summer alone, including the tragic loss of 29 Sailors and Marines. As you head out to the beach, marina, pool, etc., have a read and remember the painful missteps that ruined the summers of these fellow naval service members.



- **Slider's Bad Day.** —*It wouldn't be a proper summer mishaps dispatch without a Top Gun beach volleyball reference.* A Sailor was playing beach volleyball during the "over the hump" party—the midpoint of their deployment. While going for the ball, the Sailor didn't see a "sandpit," according to the report, and fell in it. He heard his ankle pop about three times (*eesh!*). The Sailor's foot was iced and wrapped in an ace bandage. He was issued ibuprofen and a pair of crutches and placed on light duty for seven days. —*We can't help but wonder; didn't anyone see a sand pit in or near the volleyball court? Scout out your court area before the match and ensure the kids aren't digging for buried treasure nearby.*
- **Don't "Jump Right In"** —Zac Brown. A Sailor experienced radial numbness down his arm after diving in a shallow swimming pool. He was taken to the Emergency Room (ER), where a Computed Tomography (CT) scan determined that he had fractured three vertebrae in his neck. He required emergency surgery to place plates and screws in his upper spine. —*The report doesn't say if alcohol was a factor, but regardless, please stop doing this! Our database has too many records of Sailors and Marines jumping and diving into shallow water, and some with tragic outcomes.*
- **Nothing Humerus About It.** A Sailor was bird-watching at the local park when she spotted a bird on the side of a jetty. After climbing up the jetty and observing the bird for a bit, the Sailor headed back down the jetty, slipped on a wet rock, and fell approximately six feet, landing on another rock. The Sailor noted that her left arm was "disfigured" underneath her and called a nearby friend for help. Later at the ER, X-rays revealed that the Sailor fractured her left humerus (upper arm). —*If you're hot on the trail of a rare American Oystercatcher, or you're about to capture an award-winning photo of the threatened Roseate Spoonbill, mind your step on slippery rocks. The pain is not worth the fame.*
- **Safety Brief, Schmafety Brief.** Seven Sailors signed up for an off-duty excursion of an inflatable boat ride behind a jet ski. With four Sailors on one side of the boat and three on the other, off they went. While cruising at approximately 20 mph, the tour guide (*and we use the term "guide" lightly*) made a sharp left turn, ejecting two Sailors into the water. Upon impact with the water, the back of Sailor 1's head collided with Sailor 2's forehead. The "guide" recovered the "ejectees." Sailor 1 had headache pain, while Sailor 2 seemed to be OK. Sailor 1 was transported to the ER and diagnosed with a concussion. The report noted that the two Sailors did not follow the safety instructions (holding onto the handles at all times). The five Sailors who didn't fall off the inflatable boat showed what happens when you heed the safety brief. —*Safety briefs are not for chumps, they're for your safety, so listen up!*
- **The Road to Pain is Paved With Good Intentions.** A Sailor was kayaking for approximately four hours on a clear, hot summer afternoon. He wore shorts and a tee shirt and applied sunscreen (*good job!*). The Sailor reapplied sunscreen throughout the day but noticed that it wasn't covering well due to his wet skin

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from paddling—not good. As you may have guessed, the reapplication had little benefit and the Sailor realized it the next day when he had severe pain, swelling, and muscle weakness. The base clinic treated him for severe sunburn and placed him on 72 hours sick in quarters. —*Doing the right thing halfway right is still wrong. Water-resistant sunscreen with the right Sun Protection Factor (SPF) would have made all the difference.*

- **Un-Happy Feet.** A Marine was surfing, lost her balance, and bailed off her surfboard. She jumped feet first into shallow water, lacerating her right foot on the coral reef below. Realizing her foot was severely cut, the Marine paddled to the beach to seek first aid. She was transported to the ER, where she received numerous stitches. —*Good job for going feet first, but surfing or swimming over a shallow reef is never a good idea. Risk management doesn’t end when you’re off duty. Know the conditions, especially the tide in this case, before you hit the waves.*
- **Walking on Empty.** A Sailor was doing a 12.5-mile walk...during black flag heat conditions (*more than 90 degrees*). Near the end of his walk, the Sailor experienced nausea and dizziness and stopped at a shaded residential area. He was eventually admitted to the hospital and treated for severe dehydration. —*Exposure to hot, humid environments takes getting used to. Consider the temperature and humidity when planning your exercise. The black flag on base is not a pirate flag, it’s telling you it’s too hot for strenuous physical activity outside. Stay hydrated, my friends.*
- **Solo Swim Lesson Goes Awry.** A Sailor went with his liberty buddies to a theme park. While his buddies rode the roller coaster, the Sailor—who wasn’t a strong swimmer—headed for the wave pool. After about 30 minutes in the pool, the lifeguards had to rescue the Sailor and transport him to the local medical center, where he was placed in the intensive care unit for observation. —*This Sailor knew he was not a skilled swimmer and wanted to get some pool time in to improve. We admire this Sailor’s dedication, but the wave pool is not the best place to learn basic swimming skills. If you’re a poor swimmer, ride the roller coaster and save the swimming skill challenge for a calmer pool.*
- **Avast!** A Sailor had his boat at anchor and partially beached on a local shoal. While standing on the gunwale stringing a sunshade, a boat came through the narrows at high speed, ignoring the no-wake zone. The resulting wake rocked the Sailor’s boat, causing him to lose his grip and footing, ending with a fall onto the sand next to the boat. After getting his boat back home, the Sailor reported to the base medical center, where X-rays revealed fractures in his hand and wrist. —*There are a couple of lessons here: 1) Keep your head on a swivel when boating. You don’t always have control of the actions of others, and 2) Don’t be that guy. Boat responsibly and slow down to no-wake speed when near other boaters.*

Key Takeaways

We could tell many more tales of the missteps of individuals in the naval services, but we think you get the point. The seasons and hazards may change, but how we should approach those hazards remains constant. These tips could apply to any season or activity.

1. **Throttle back a bit.** We understand the “work hard, play hard” philosophy, but that doesn’t mean playing dangerously. Whatever activity you’re doing, whether it’s summer-related or not, take a minute to consider the hazards around you and the potential consequences of your actions. Have fun, but come home safe at the end of the day.
2. **Nature usually prevails.** Whatever outdoor activity you enjoy, there are hazards unique to your environment (including wildlife) that you may not have experienced since last season. Don’t “jump right in” until you’ve considered those hazards and taken the appropriate measures to mitigate them beforehand.
3. **Go easy on the alcohol.** You knew this one was coming, didn’t you? Well, it bears repeating often because our database is FILLED with alcohol-related mishaps. Drink responsibly, please.

And remember, “Let’s be careful out there”