

Naval Safety Command

Risk Awareness: Off Duty Risk Impacts Operational Readiness



A large percentage of fatal mishaps across the Naval Enterprise occur not in operational settings, but during off-duty activities – especially involving privately owned motor vehicles (PMV-2 and PMV-4). These losses have a devastating impact on readiness, morale, and mission continuity. While leaders cannot control Sailors and Marines' actions off-duty, they can influence decision-making through expectations, conversations, and command culture.

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Leaders who proactively engage in off-duty risk conversations create a culture where safety is seen as a 24/7 responsibility. The same mindset that protects lives in uniform should extend beyond the workplace. Modeling and reinforcing risk-aware behavior – on and off duty – is a leadership imperative.

The Facts: PMV Mishaps Remain a Leading Cause of Fatalities

- PMV-4 (cars/trucks) and PMV-2 (motorcycles) consistently top the list of off-duty fatalities across the DoD.
- Contributing factors include speed, alcohol, fatigue, inexperience, and failure to wear safety equipment.
- Many mishaps involve E-5 and below, but leadership at all levels is affected by the consequences.

24/7 Safety: Command Influence Outside the Workplace

- **Use Every Touchpoint:** Quick safety reminders during briefs go a long way.
- **Ask, Don't Assume:** "Got a plan?" can spark safer choices.
- **Make It Local:** Mention real hazards in your area to keep it relevant.



USS Curtis Wilbur (DDG 54) Conducts Mobility- Engineering Drill.

Leadership Influence Off-Duty

Senior leaders set the tone for what is discussed, normalized, and prioritized – including life outside the command.

Ways to influence off-duty safety:

- Include seasonal travel, long weekends, and liberty risk factors in all-hands messaging and command quarters.
- Encourage frank, judgment-free discussions about decision-making, fatigue, and peer influence.
- Use real-world incidents and lessons learned to make safety personal – not just procedural.

Command Climate and Connection

Commands with stronger interpersonal connection and visible leadership presence often see fewer off-duty incidents. When Sailors and Marines feel seen, supported, and held to clear expectations, they are more likely to make informed choices off-duty.

- Engage with your team personally about plans for long weekends or high-risk activities.
- Encourage mentorship between senior and junior personnel on responsible behavior.
- Leverage programs like mentorship boards, liberty buddy systems, and safety stand-downs to make safety visible and relevant.

Helpful Tip: Mishaps don't end at the gate. Unit commanders who prioritize off-duty risk as seriously as operational risk send a powerful message: Your life matters, in and out of uniform. A command culture that values safety around the clock not only protects individuals – it preserves the warfighting capability of the entire team.



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