

On the Cutting Edge



By PR3 John Bradley

Many ideas, in hindsight, simply don't turn out to be the best decisions. I recently proved that I'm no different than anyone else when my great idea turned into a nightmare.

I consider myself a good worker, well motivated, and I feel that I practice safety in everything that I do. I have been in the Navy for three years and ever since I can remember, I have heard ORM preached in every way. Yet, mishaps happen when you least expect it, and usually because of poor headwork.

The morning of my incident was like so many before; my shop had our hands full. Being a parachute rigger, I don't have the jet work that the other shops face, but my shop more than makes up for it with our work on aircrew gear.

On this particular morning, I was doing a routine build-up on the flight gear for one of our new aircrew.



This work is relatively simple but a time-consuming process. We still had a lot of work to do and wanted to get this job done quickly so the lieutenant could start flying. I never dreamed doing something so simple could cause such a problem.

While putting in the tackings on a survival vest, I ran into a very thick piece of webbing. It almost was impossible to push the thick hook needle I was using

through the material. Unfortunately, it was the smallest needle that we had. We have special tools to force a straight needle through thicker material but that step didn't work. In fact, the straight needle is thicker than the hook needle!

I am a pretty resourceful person and tried different ways to get the tacking in, all to no avail. Finally, I decided to try and put a small hole in the webbing using a pair of small scissors that we have. It seemed like a simple enough task, but boy was I wrong. Just poking a hole through the material was a hard task to accomplish. While attempting to make a hole through the material, the scissors slipped. I luckily had sharpened the scissors just before starting work on the vest. Was that a good idea or what?

When the scissors slipped off the webbing, one edge sliced right through the pad on my left index finger. My first thought was not an uncommon one, "Oops," followed with a few choice words. My next thought was more on target: "Man, was that dumb," followed with a few more words not fit to print.

The blood now was flowing freely out of my finger. When it wouldn't stop, I knew I was on my way to the emergency room. An hour later, I had five stitches in my finger and a week of limited duty.

Because of my carelessness and the already thin manning in my shop, everyone else will have to work even harder to get our mounting workload done. I clearly can see NOW what I had done was wrong. Just like in any game, it's easier to point out the problems after the clock ticks off. I learned a valuable lesson, and a thorough ORM review or even a quick dose of time-critical ORM would have pointed out how bad it could get when I used a non-standard tool for this simple function. I'm alive and ready to move forward in my career with one simple reminder of a bad decision. 🗡️

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