

# The Price of Being Impetuous



His badly damaged motorcycle was 200 feet away.

The primary factor in this collision was unsafe speed. The Sailor doesn't remember how fast he was going but said he knows it was too fast for the curve. "I was taking out my anguish on the throttle," he noted. He also explained that he had put a set of used tires on his motorcycle, and, if he had let them warm up first, he probably would have been able to handle the curve.

The victim spent two weeks in a hospital. He said he'll never again deal with his anger by speeding on his motorcycle, and he's probably right—courtesy of permanent total disability. ■

It started out with an argument between a Sailor and his girlfriend one evening. The 19-year-old bluejacket was sitting in his room at the barracks, talking to her on the phone at the time.

Intent on getting to the bottom of the situation, the Sailor ended the phone call and got a shipmate to take him to a friend's house where he was keeping his motorcycle. The reason his bike was there is that he just had checked into his command and hadn't taken the required motorcycle-safety course to get a base sticker. He was scheduled to take that course, as well as the required base driver-improvement course, later in the month.

Once at his friend's house, the Sailor hopped on his motorcycle and headed to his girlfriend's parents' house at a high rate of speed. As he approached an intersection where the road curves to the right, he ran into the raised, curb-high, center concrete median. He subsequently lost control of the motorcycle and slid into a street sign located in the median, breaking the signpost, amputating his left leg, and mangling his right one so badly doctors had to amputate it, too.

A sheriff who happened by found the victim, who still was conscious.

*This mishap occurred July 7, 2004. In the next 60 days, there were at least four more motorcycle crashes (that's how many mishap-report messages I personally saw) involving Navy riders. In case you haven't heard, shipmates, we're trying to reduce—not increase—mishaps by 50 percent. Just take a look at all the carnage from these other cases.—Ed.*



## A Good Reason for Training

A 23-year-old PO2 was headed to a friend's house, traveling a two-lane road about 40 mph. As he started around a corner, a friend riding near him made the same turn, causing the PO2 to lose control. He veered off the road into a grass patch and was thrown from the motorcycle.

Injuries included a broken left clavicle and numerous bruises to the victim's left torso. He was treated and released the same day at a local hospital but will miss six to eight weeks of work.

The PO2 had no motorcycle training, nor had he gone through the motorcycle-safety course. ■



## Unlike the Timex Watch...

Some things can't take a lickin' and keep on tickin'. For example, a 21-year-old PO2 and a 47-year-old civilian were riding their motorcycles as part of a group. They were going about 40 mph, in a 35-mph zone, when the civilian rider stopped because traffic was backed up at an intersection. The PO2 couldn't stop in time and ran into the

other bike with his front tire, ejecting both himself and his passenger about 20 or 25 feet.

The PO2 and his passenger hit their heads on the ground—neither one was wearing a helmet—and suffered serious injuries. They had to be flown to a hospital, where doctors treated the PO2 for skull fractures, pneumocephaly [*air in the cranial cavity*], subdural hematoma [*blood clot in the brain*], and subarachnoid bleeding [*bleeding into the space around the brain and spinal cord*]. Nine days later, he was evaluated and sent TAD to a Veteran's Administration Medical Center.

Meanwhile, his passenger was treated for extensive brain trauma but never recovered. She died five days after the mishap.

The civilian rider suffered only a bruised right shoulder.

The PO2 has six years of riding experience.

He attended a DoT rider-safety course at the age of 16 and also has completed the DoD motorcycle-safety training course, so he knew about the requirement for wearing a helmet.

As a result of this incident, the PO2's command initiated additional training for all hands, with emphasis on the requirement to wear safety devices on and off base, even if state laws don't require them. Small group seminars provided in-depth interaction between riders of differ-

ent experience levels. A command buddy program, pairing junior Sailors with shipmates from outside their own departments, was implemented to provide a sounding board and reference to enhance the use of good judgment.

Officials from the local police department also participated in the training. They covered the importance of driving alertly, no matter what type of motor vehicle you're operating, and included an extensive discussion of the individual decision-making process. ■



## Never Saw It Coming

A 21-year-old PO3 was riding his motorcycle in a recreational area before daybreak—at 0400, to be precise. There was just one problem: His motorcycle didn't have a headlight. He had that problem covered, though; he had a shipmate riding with him. The light on the shipmate's bike was providing the necessary illumination.

The shipmate eventually realized what they were doing wasn't safe and tried unsuccessfully to convince the PO3 to stop. The PO3 kept going until his bike fell into a crevasse. He wasn't conscious or breathing when the shipmate reached him, so he started CPR. Emergency-services personnel were called, and they pronounced the victim dead at the scene.

An investigation was convened, with alcohol use suspected as a factor in the mishap. The PO3 also wasn't wearing any PPE. The mishap report didn't say whether he had received any formal rider training or had taken the required motorcycle-safety course. ■

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## Watch Out for Those Arrow Signs

It was 0045, and, despite the fact the roads were wet from a sudden storm that had passed, moonlight now was providing good visibility as a 34-year-old chief petty officer rode his motorcycle down a road. He was going the posted speed limit—45 mph—when he suddenly lost control on the wet pavement and slammed into three arrow signs, indicating a curve.

The CPO's wife took him to a local hospital where he was treated for injuries to his back and face. He went on convalescent leave for 21 days, with another 14 days of limited duty.

Police cited the CPO, who has 15 years of riding experience, with careless driving, leaving the scene of property damage, and having no motorcycle endorsement on his driver's license. Records show he has completed a DoD-approved motorcycle safety course. ■

*In FY04, the Navy recorded 25 motorcycle fatalities for the fiscal year—more than have occurred in any one of the last five years. The primary causes for these mishaps have been speeding, losing control, striking another object, and drinking. Some of these deaths were not preventable (e.g., car pulling out in front of motorcycle), but most could have been avoided. To quote Commander, Naval Safety Center, RADM Dick Brooks, "We must do better."—Ed.*

