



At War in My Bathroom

We talk, hear and read so much about work-related injuries that we sometimes forget that most Sailors are injured while off-duty. I know, because I was one of those Sailors.

After a long week of work, I was at home catching up on some well-deserved rest and relaxation. I had spent most of the day cleaning my apartment, and when I finished, I took a shower. Soon after I shut off the water, the phone rang, and I hurriedly leapt out of the tub. My feet, still wet from the shower, met the bathroom tile with about the same friction as a greased pig on ice.

I flung out my hands, windmilling in a futile attempt to catch my balance. My right hand, with all my weight bearing down on it, came crashing down on a glass toothbrush holder. The holder shattered into a thousand pieces. Every one of them seemed to stab my skin.

It was like I was at war with the bathroom, and the bathroom was winning! I looked down at my hand. There was a cut about a half-inch above my right wrist, below my thumb. I could easily see the bone and inner-workings of my hand. My bathroom looked like a butcher shop. Blood was splattered on the wall in a Picasso-like fashion.

Here it was, 1730 on a Sunday, I was naked, bleeding and in my bathroom off base. I grabbed a towel, wrapped it around my hand, called an ambulance, and hastily started dressing myself. By the time the ambulance arrived, I was feeling more than a little faint from the loss of blood.

I ended up with 18 stitches and a 3-inch scar. I have lost part of the feeling in my thumb. The doctors put me on limited duty for three weeks. I consider myself lucky when I think about what could have happened. If the cut had been a little lower, I would have looked like an attempted-suicide patient.

In retrospect, this injury (like most of them) could have been easily prevented had I not been in such a hurry to answer the phone (answering machines and Caller ID, anyone?). Maybe a little ORM would have helped, also.

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A Pointed Lesson in Safety

When I was an AMS1, I would go to every extreme to ensure people in my workcenter followed all safety procedures. I took pride in our safety record and couldn't imagine why people would put themselves in harm's way by taking shortcuts. But that was at work. At home, it was a different story—until the day I learned a pointed lesson.

I was getting ready to do body work on my severely corroded pickup truck. I organized the tools and prepped the work area. I covered every detail from A to Z, or so I thought. I had missed item G: goggles.

After I sanded the huge chunks of corrosion, it was time for drilling. At work, I never would start drilling without putting on a pair of protective goggles. So, why was it different at home? I have no idea.

The drill bit broke as it bit into the truck's body, and, like an "eye-seeking missile," it went straight to its target. I slapped my hands over my right eye.

"I'm going to lose my eye for sure," I thought as I hurried into my house to find a mirror. When I looked, I saw a red spot on the white part of my eye, but the bit hadn't penetrated. My eye was painful, but I could see out of it.

After this incident, I bought a pair of goggles and always use them when doing jobs that might harm my eyes. I found out it's true that if there is a rule at work, it also applies to jobs at home.

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Lullaby and Good Night

Put babies to sleep on their backs in a crib with a firm, tight-fitting mattress. Cribs should have slats no more than 2 3/8 inches apart and no corner posts more than 1 1/6 inch high so clothing won't catch on them. Also, there should be no cutouts in the head or foot that could trap a baby's head.

When putting infants under 12 months to sleep, remove all pillows, quilts, comforters, and other soft items from the crib to prevent suffocation. Consider using a sleeper as an alternative to a blanket. If you use a blanket, put the baby's feet at the foot of the crib. Tuck a thin blanket around the mattress, reaching only as far as the baby's chest. Make sure the baby's head remains uncovered during sleep.

Do not place a baby on a waterbed, sofa, soft mattress, pillow, or other soft surface to sleep.

When using a crib at a hotel or motel, be sure there are no loose screws, that the mattress is covered with a fitted crib sheet (not a sheet for an adult bed), that there are no corner posts, and that the mattress is firm. Some hotels and motels have joined CPSC in the initiative to keep infants safe while sleeping. When making reservations, ask if the hotel or motel has a system to ensure their cribs are safe.

You can get further information at the CPSC web site at <http://www.cpsc.gov>.

[Note: RAdm. Joyce Johnson, USPHS, Director of Health and Safety for the Coast Guard, sent this message (R221904ZAUG00) reminding parents and caregivers to make sure infants are tucked in their cribs properly. The information in that message is universal, and we wanted to share it with you.—Ed.]

has had this happen, and normally your vision clears as your natural tears lubricate and rinse the lens. So I thought nothing of it. Back on my ship later that evening, I was watching TV in the crew's lounge. My vision was still hazy, and I rubbed my eye. That's when it happened...

My eye started burning. I rushed into the head and tried to remove the lens. After several painful tries, I was able to get it out. Instead of getting better, the pain got worse. After an hour of trying to get the pain to subside by soaking my eye with wet handkerchiefs, I got a ride to the hospital.

A corpsman put drops in my eyes to relieve the pain so a doctor could diagnose my condition. He said that by not rinsing the lens thoroughly when I cleaned it that morning, I had caused a corneal abrasion on the surface of my eye. He told me to see an optometrist in the morning, put a patch over my eye, gave me a pain killer, and sent me on my way. I still had the other contact lens in.

The next morning, the optometrist helped me get the other contact out. It felt almost as bad as the other one did the night before. After counseling me on proper lens care, the doc gave me some drops for my eyes and told me to come back in a week. He also told me not to wear my contacts for about a month.

Because it was my stand-down period, I didn't have any lost workdays. My eyes have healed, and I wear my contacts daily. Although I'm still using the same brand of cleaner, I take my time and rinse my lenses thoroughly.

I don't want to dissuade anyone from getting contact lenses. Just make sure you follow your optometrist's instructions and read the precautions on the cleaning solutions.

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My Eye Is On Fire

At least, that's what it felt like.

Just before Christmas a few years ago, I planned to go out with friends to a mall and catch a movie, something we often did. However, this time, we were going to do it in the morning, grab some breakfast, and watch an early movie. My friend was in a hurry to go, so I cleaned my contact lenses and popped them in.

My cleaner had a mild abrasive that removes enzymes from the lens. You have to rinse them off thoroughly before putting the lens back in your eye. But I was in a hurry and did not rinse them good enough.

After a few hours, I noticed my vision had become somewhat hazy. Anyone who has worn contact lenses

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