

Reducing Mishaps - Saving Lives - Improving Readiness

# SEA & SHORE

SPRING 2005

The Naval Safety Center's Magazine for Afloat and Shore Safety



Fifth Annual Traffic-Safety Magazine

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The Naval Safety Center's Magazine for Afloat and Shore Safety

SPRING 2005

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Mishaps waste our time and resources. They take our Sailors, Marines and civilian employees away from their units and workplaces and put them in hospitals, wheelchairs and coffins. Mishaps ruin equipment and weapons. They diminish our readiness. This magazine's goal is to help make sure that personnel can devote their time and energy to the mission, and that any losses are due to enemy action, not to our own errors, shortcuts or failure to manage risk. We believe there is only one way to do any task: the way that follows the rules and takes precautions against hazards. Combat is dangerous and demanding enough; the time to learn to do a job right is before combat starts.

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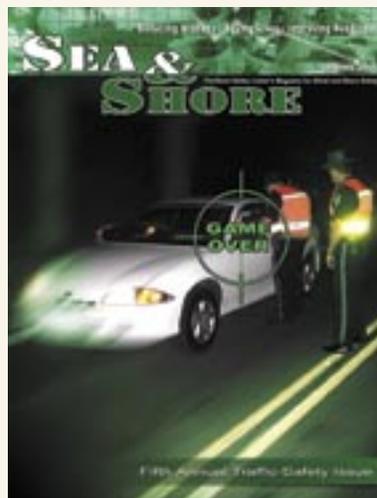
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Cover graphics by Jeff Hobrath of KR Systems, Inc. (krsystems.com)

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### We Want Your Opinion

We've established a Web-based survey just so you can tell us what you like and dislike about *Sea&Shore*. To participate in the survey, visit this site between March 21 and April 22: [http://ice.disa.mil/survey\\_library/go.cfm?SeaShore](http://ice.disa.mil/survey_library/go.cfm?SeaShore).



*Admiral's Corner*

*From Commander, Naval Safety Center*

## It Only Takes One Time

**T**hat's the lesson 18-year-old Airman Jonique Sullivan learned Nov. 18, 2004. Until that date, the VX-1 Sailor always had been careful behind the wheel of her car. In her words, "Defensive driving was my middle name."

What made Nov. 18, 2004, different? Jonique was excited—she just had flown on her first SH-60 familiarization flight. She wanted to get home and get the pictures developed from her adventure so she could send them to her mother. "I really was pumped up and excited as I headed to the photo counter at a local Wal-Mart," she explained.

The problem was that her "rush" coincided with "rush hour" traffic—it was 1730, and everyone was getting off work. It also was starting to get dark.

As Jonique approached a red light, she noticed a Dodge Ram rapidly closing behind her. A quick glance in the rearview mirror after she had stopped told her this guy was going to hit her. "Oh, my God; please, Lord, don't let me die like this!" she thought moments before the impact. She then let go of the steering wheel and shielded her face.

The force of the rear-end collision pushed Jonique's car (a 2003 Ford Taurus) forward 40 to 50 feet. When it had stopped moving, **she took off her seat belt**, exited the car, and checked for damage while waiting for the police to come.

Jonique considers herself very lucky, and so do I. Why? Because all she suffered from the incident were some minor muscle strains and back pains. "Nothing was broken, and I wasn't bleeding," she noted. Meanwhile, her car was a total loss.

The lesson here, as Jonique put it, is simple: "If I hadn't been wearing my seat belt, I might have been killed." As it is, she's still breathing and back to normal.

No matter how good a driver you think you are, how many precautions you take, or how invincible you may feel, something bad can happen in the blink of an eye. "In one moment, lives can be changed forever," said Jonique, "so always wear a seat belt."

According to data based on observational surveys during site and assist visits, safety-belt usage in the Navy averages 91 percent, compared to *[as related in a Dec. 22, 2004, local newspaper article]* 80 percent nationwide and 79.9 percent in Virginia. Only seven Navy victims, however, who died in FY03 four-wheel PMV mishaps are known to have been wearing seat belts. **Nineteen, or 48 percent, of the fatalities were not wearing restraints**, and no determination has been made yet in 14 cases.

It's simple...**Wear your seat belt!**

RADM Dick Brooks

# WORK ZONE

## REDUCING MISHAPS BY 50%

# Defensive Driving

**S**eventy-three Sailors and 46 Marines dead...six Sailors and five Marines totally disabled...one Sailor and 13 Marines partly disabled...another 131 Sailors and 27 Marines with major injuries (involving five or more lost workdays). Those FY04 numbers are grim reminders of the toll our nation's highways continue to take on our most precious resource.

And the carnage doesn't stop there. Nationwide, more than 41,000 people die in motor-vehicle crashes each year, and more than two million suffer disabling injuries, according to the National Safety Council. The triple threat of high speeds, impaired or careless driving, and not using occupant restraints threatens every driver—regardless of how careful or how skilled.

Driving defensively means not only taking responsibility for yourself and your actions but also keeping an eye on “the other guy.” The National Safety Council suggests these guidelines to help reduce your risks on the road:

- Don't start the engine without securing each passenger in the car, including children and pets. Safety belts save thousands of lives each year. Lock all doors.
- Remember that driving too fast or too slow can increase the likelihood of collisions.
- Don't kid yourself; if you plan to drink, designate a driver who won't drink. Alcohol is a factor in almost half of all fatal motor-vehicle crashes.
- If you're taking a prescription medication, read the warnings on the label. Consult your physician or pharmacist about how your medication or over-the-counter drug could affect your driving.
- Be alert! If you notice that a car is straddling the center line, weaving, making wide turns, stopping abruptly, or responding slowly to traffic signals, the driver may be impaired. Avoid an impaired driver by turning right at the nearest corner or taking the closest exit. If it appears that an oncoming car is crossing into your lane, pull over to the roadside, sound the horn, and flash your lights. Immediately notify the police about any motorist driving radically.
- Follow the rules of the road. Don't contest the “right of way” or try to race another car during a merge. Be respectful of other motorists.
- Don't follow too closely. Always use a three-second or three-second-plus following distance.
- While driving, be cautious, aware and responsible. Never exceed the posted speed limit; weather conditions permitting, always maintain the legal speed limit. When driving on a highway, always be prepared for drivers to change lanes suddenly in order to exit. Don't let emotions dominate your driving. Don't drive when you're tired; if

you feel tired, pull off the road for some exercise, fresh air, and a cup of coffee, or take a nap.

- Drive a well-maintained vehicle, checking these elements at least weekly: cooling system (radiator, radiator cap, thermostat, and hoses), brake and brake fluids, belts (fan, alternator, and air conditioning), tires, engine fluids (motor oil, transmission fluid, and coolant), lights, wiper blades.
- Expect other drivers to make mistakes at intersections. Here are four preventive rules to follow:
  - ☞ When approaching a green light, be prepared for it to turn red. It may have been green for a long time.
  - ☞ When stopped at a red light and it turns green, proceed slowly. Look left and right before you drive through the intersection.
  - ☞ Yellow lights mean proceed with caution, not speed up to get through the intersection before the light turns red.
  - ☞ Turning right at a red light is not permitted in every state. Even in states where it is permitted, turning right isn't allowed in some intersections. Watch for signs at the intersection.
- If you're going to pass a car, follow these rules:
  - ☞ Make sure you're in a passing zone.
  - ☞ Be certain there is no oncoming traffic.
  - ☞ Look in all mirrors carefully before you make a lane change. Look behind you for any vehicles that might be trying to pass you. Be aware of any blind spots. Once the lane is clear, signal your intentions, move into the passing lane, and accelerate past the car in front of you.
- Never look directly at an approaching car's headlights. Use the right edge of the pavement as a lane guide until the other car has passed.
- Be aware of any potential road hazards. Watch for cars that suddenly swerve from their lanes to avoid pot holes, construction barriers, or stalled vehicles.
- Bad weather, such as rain, snow or fog can make driving difficult. Always watch for these conditions and be prepared to take defensive actions. Follow these bad-weather tips:
  - ☞ Slow down if the roads are wet because the tires on your car can lose traction.
  - ☞ If your car goes into a skid because of snow and ice on the roads, immediately take your foot off the accelerator. Keep your foot off the brake, and steer in the direction the rear of the vehicle is skidding. Hold the steering wheel firmly, but don't make any large turns. Use a light touch to correct the problem.
  - ☞ Slow down as you approach shaded areas, bridges and overpasses in winter because these areas freeze first and stay frozen longer. ■



# Good

**It's a fact: Seat belts save thousands of lives each year.**

# Bad

**One only can hope the adults here made these young girls get seated correctly and buckled up before the car started moving.**



# Ugly

**Even a seat belt couldn't save the Sailor driving this car when, with a BAC twice the legal limit of 0.08, he hit a telephone pole at an estimated 95 mph. Three passengers with seat belts, however, escaped with injuries.**

# A Memorable Winter Ride

By AECS(AW) R. A. Averbeck,  
VAQ-139

It was a winter afternoon in the Pacific Northwest, and the weather finally was nice for a change. It had been raining for more than a week, but, with the sunshine, I figured it was time to take a ride on my motorcycle.

I just had gotten my license that summer and still was eager to ride the first bike I ever had bought. With a full body suit to keep me warm, even with the temperature hanging around 42 degrees Fahrenheit, I was well-prepared. I probably looked like Snoopy going down the highway, though, because my roommate's girlfriend had made me a scarf to cover my neck, and I liked to let the tail hang out the back.

I left home around 1230, figuring I could be back in about two hours. I just was going to the base exchange to pick up some cigarettes—a 35-mile trip, one way. As I headed out of town, the roads had dried, and it was refreshing to be on the highway. “Why not have a great time and kick up the speed a little?” I thought. “No police ever patrol the flats, and, besides, you can see for miles.”

The trip through Deception Pass was a lot of fun until I came around the corner by Deception Pass Lake. The temperature suddenly dropped about 10 degrees in 50 feet. As I slowed down to keep the motorcycle upright in the corner, I started wondering about black ice. I'd seen this corner freeze before anywhere else during the five years I had been traveling back and forth to work. I could see ice on the edge of the lake, but the road hadn't frozen over yet, so I continued slowly.

When I came out of Deception Pass and entered Whidbey Island, the whole world had changed—it was white with snow. The roads still were clear, but the scenery looked a lot different, and it all had happened in only five minutes. At



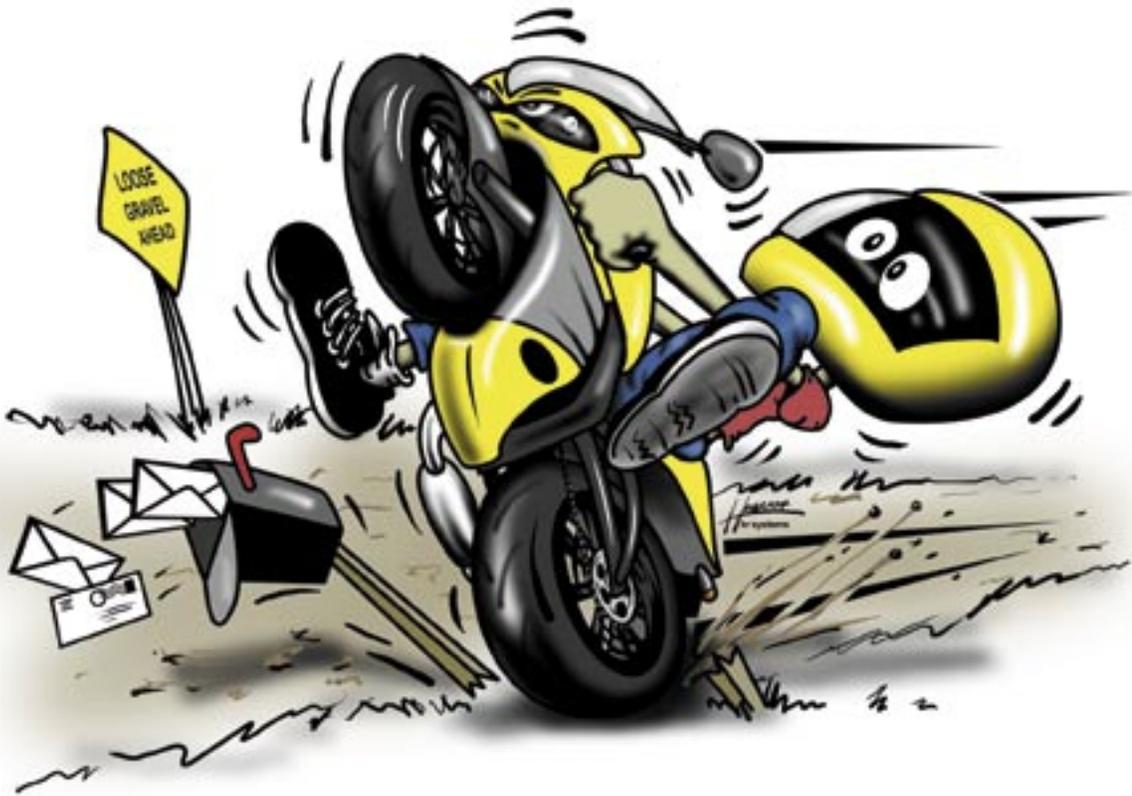
this point, I decided to continue to my destination because it was only 7 miles farther.

The roads stayed fine until I arrived on the base; I now was traveling on hard, packed snow. To make matters worse, the road was one way, so I couldn't turn around. Luckily, sand had been put down, and I was able to keep moving slowly toward the exchange's parking lot.

As I turned into the lot, I saw several people watching me. My guess is they were wondering why any fool would want to be riding a motorcycle in these conditions. I parked, quickly made my purchase, and headed back home. I no longer felt like Snoopy; instead, I felt like parking my motorcycle to avoid continuing the 1-mph pace I was being forced to travel.

In the end, I made it home without incident and with a great story to share with friends over a couple beers. Since then, I have become something of a weather-watcher. I also have moved on to full-size 4X4 vehicles. When I ride my motorcycle—in any season—I carefully choose my destinations. ■

# PROOF THAT STUPID



By AM2(NAC) Shaun Dugan,  
HT-18

**I**t was supposed to be a fairly normal weekend. I loaded my motorcycle in the back of my truck Friday after work and headed from NAS Whiting Field in Milton, Fla., to Denham Springs, La. I was going home to see my dad and some friends.

I didn't plan to do a lot of riding over the weekend, so I didn't take all the required protective gear I usually ride with. Instead, I took only my helmet and gloves, and, as it turned out, I didn't even wear the latter—stupid me!

The main reason I was taking my bike home was to show it to some friends who never had seen it. I also was going to have my dad look at the motorcycle's frame and make a threaded stud for the left side fairings that had been broken a month earlier when I had had to lay down the bike. Luckily, I had been wearing all my protective gear on that occasion and was able to ride away with only

a sore ankle. Other than that broken stud and some scratches, my bike was OK, too. That incident happened while I was on my way to pick up a new helmet I had ordered.

When I awoke Saturday at home, it was a beautiful morning. I was supposed to help my dad change the fuel pump on his truck, but I decided to go for a quick ride beforehand. I unloaded my bike and started it up. While waiting for it to get warm, I went inside to grab my helmet and to tell my dad I would be back in a few minutes. I was dressed in the same clothes I had worn the night before, along with a pair of sneakers that I had left at my dad's house.

I walked outside, strapping on my helmet, but I had forgotten the gloves in my backpack. I climbed on the bike and had gone about a mile down the road before I turned around and headed back to

# DAD HURTS

Dad's house. Feeling like I wanted to add a little to my morning ride, I opened the throttle a little and downshifted a gear from high to let the power of the bike pop up the front wheel about a foot. I remember my bike was turning about 8,000 rpm when I downshifted, and the 599-cc engine put the bike and me perpendicular to the road beneath. All I could think of was, "I'm about to wreck, and I'm going to be all over the road without my leathers."

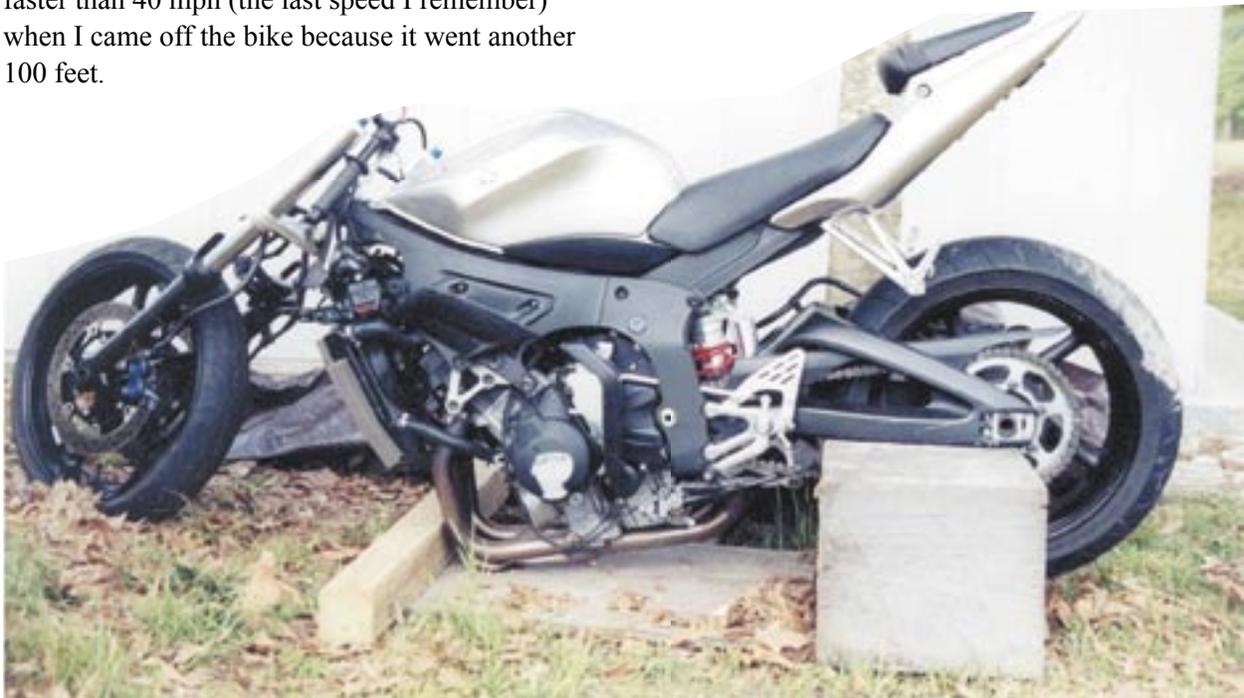
I remember coming off the back of my bike and my left buttocks hitting the ground first. Then, somehow, I was thrown up onto my feet before being thrown down onto the face of my helmet. Both my hands and my left elbow hit the ground about the same time my helmet did. My knees also made contact about the same time. When I stopped sliding and rolling, my stomach, back, shoulders, right elbow, back of my right hand, and my knees all hurt. I also noticed a small cut on the outside edge of my left foot, as well as road rash and bruises on one heel and two toes.

I assume that, when I was coming off the bike, I pulled even harder on the throttle, causing the bike to keep coming over. I had to have been going faster than 40 mph (the last speed I remember) when I came off the bike because it went another 100 feet.

I got up off the ground and started walking toward my dad's house, thinking, "Man, my butt hurts!" It was then I noticed dirt and debris scattered on the road. I was walking with a limp—not from pain but because I was missing my left shoe. Somewhere in my scan of things, I saw a mailbox on the ground that I knew used to be on a wooden post on the left side of the road. About 20 feet later, I saw my bike in the ditch on the left side of the road—in front of my best friend's house. All I could tell at that moment was that the front end of my bike was jacked up. It looked like it had a set of chopper forks.

As I neared Dad's house, he was standing in the road. I could tell he was crying when he said, "Oh my God! I told you to be careful."

I responded, "I'm OK," even though he could tell I wasn't. I pulled off my helmet and put it in the back of my truck, then looked down to see there wasn't much left of my shirt. My hands were chewed up and covered in blood, and my chest and stomach looked like someone had come after me with a sander and filet knife. All I wanted to do was to wash off some of the blood, dirt and asphalt.





Once in the house, I took off what was left of my clothes and turned on the shower. Dad had followed me into the bathroom to make sure I was OK. While he was talking to me, I banged my head against the wall several times, saying, “Stupid, stupid, stupid!” in an effort to divert some of my pain. Whatever shock my body was in from the wreck immediately disappeared when the shower water hit my raw flesh. I began to scream like a baby as the pain rushed over my body, but I endured it long enough to remove most of the dirt and asphalt.

When I got out of the shower, I yelled for a towel and tried to dry my bloody body. I then wrapped the towel around my waist and walked outside to find my dad and about a dozen people, including my best friend’s mom, who had stopped by to see what had happened.

I decided I needed to go to the emergency room, so my best friend said he would drive me. I didn’t argue with him. After putting on a different pair of pants and slipping on some sandals, I gave my friend the keys to my truck. En route to the emergency room, I kept trying to adjust the thermostat to accommodate my raw body. I never had felt pain this bad.

Nurses at the E.R. asked what I needed when I walked in, but they knew the answer as soon as I removed the towel that was covering my wounds. They took me back to a room, where I told them what had happened. Then, they all left for what seemed like hours but was only minutes.

I got a couple of shots to ease the pain, then lay there with a sheet over my lap as this medic, who used to be a Marine, cleaned my road rash. The drugs and his conversation helped a lot. Afterward, the medic covered all the raw areas with a silver

ointment used on burns to prevent infection. I then got into a wheelchair, and the medic rolled me out, covered in gauze (like a mummy) and wearing two gowns.

My friend drove me to the nearest pharmacy to get my prescriptions filled—I hardly could wait to get one of the painkillers—then we headed home. I went straight to bed without saying a word to anyone. When I woke up, I called my LPO and told him what had happened. He said he was glad I had called and still was alive and told me to check in with medical the first thing Monday morning when I got back.

I spent the rest of Saturday and Sunday taking pain pills, getting re-banded by my dad, and sleeping. The doctor had said showers would be good for the wounds but acknowledged they also would bring the most pain. Accordingly, I relied on baths all weekend. Sunday, I gave up the pain pills several hours before leaving to drive back to Milton. My friend offered to drive me, but I figured if I could sit in a truck for three-and-a-half hours, I might as well drive. With hindsight being 20/20, I now realize I probably should have accepted my friend’s offer.

Once in Milton, I went to medical to see a flight surgeon and find out what they would do with me now that I was broken. Doc looked at everything and said it looked bad, but it wasn’t infected, so that was good news. He decided I should come in twice a day for dressing changes, which was OK because I lived in the barracks. With a re-supply of my prescriptions, I headed back to the treatment area, where I went twice a day for the next three weeks. That first day was a learning experience for the corpsman—the one who would help me each day. I had to tell him how to wrap me. I let him





know it would hurt, no matter how careful he was with the ointment and gauze.

I was SIQ for two weeks before I could stand the pain enough to walk around. When I went back to work, I immediately got a new call sign—"Skid Mark"—quite fitting, I must say.

I ended up getting X-rays of my ankle, which showed I just had a bruised heel. This injury limited me to six-hour workdays, which helped me heal and get an "up chit" sooner. Everyone at work, including me, was pleased when my "up chit" came. After nearly a month, I was ready to fly again and to get re-qualified, so I could help everyone.

I still have some minor pain in my heel and wrists, and I'm waiting on the skin to heal completely on my hands, arms and knees. If I had been wearing all my protective gear, most of these injuries would have been avoided, but it still would stink, knowing I wrecked a motorcycle [see accompanying photos] for which I paid \$5,500.

My fondest wish is that someone will learn something from my mistakes. When you get on a motorcycle, don't be satisfied with just meeting

the Navy's minimal requirements. A standard shirt won't last more than a few feet on asphalt—unless it's made of Kevlar—and a pair of blue jeans won't last much longer than the shirt. You also probably won't escape injuries to your feet unless you're wearing a good pair of motorcycle-riding boots.

If you think good riding gear is too expensive, compare the costs of replacing your head, a few major appendages, or some skin. If you can't afford the correct gear, maybe you shouldn't be riding.

While I was SIQ for two weeks, I had nothing better to do than to read those magazines I had bought when my motorcycle was in one piece and I was able to ride. I read one article about two professional superbike riders who had had high-speed crashes during testing at Daytona International Speedway. One of them had a back tire blow out at 186 mph. He high-sided his bike and hit the tarmac, then slid into the wall. Injuries included holes in his arms and rear, as well as some major scrapes on his back. He spent two-and-a-half weeks in a hospital, where he was cleaned and had skin grafts done.

The other rider was a little luckier. His "slide for life" came at a mere 172 mph. He didn't require two-and-a-half weeks in a hospital, but he did have temporary memory loss. A picture with the magazine article showed this rider standing with his leathers from the crash, showing holes on the backside and some on the elbows and other spots.

These stories prove your odds of surviving a crash are better when you wear the proper protective gear. Think about that fact the next time you jump on your bike, dressed only in minimum protective gear. ■

*In an 11/23/04 phone conversation with the 23-year-old author, I learned that he just recently had been in another motorcycle crash. This time, a motorist with no insurance blew through a stop sign and broadsided him, breaking his left hand and both bones in his left ankle. His left wrist was dislocated, and doctors also found some torn ligaments in it. Meanwhile, the motorist who hit the author is finding "alternate" transportation, courtesy of the police, who revoked his license. When asked if he plans to get back on his motorcycle once his injuries heal, Petty Officer Dugan said, "I will when I get my bike rebuilt again."—Ed.*

# The Lure of a

By FLTCM(SW/AW) "Buck"  
Heffernan, Commander, U.S.  
Atlantic Fleet Staff

**M**otorcycle advertisements are hitting their target, as evidenced by those Sailors who flock to local dealers to purchase one. Unfortunately, some who buy motorcycles aren't really prepared for two-wheeled transportation.

In FY2004, the Navy had 25 motorcycle fatalities, four total disabilities, two partial disabilities, and 51 Sailors with major injuries (missed five or more workdays). The previous fiscal year's totals were 23 motorcycle fatalities, one total disability, two partial disabilities, and 49 Sailors with major injuries.

What do these statistics say to me? When you're in a motorcycle crash, it's either very minor, or it's fatal. Given that fact, every Sailor who rides a motorcycle or is thinking about buying one should be aware of the risks and the rules that apply—some are common sense, but others are Navy law.

To obtain a base decal, a motorcyclist has to be licensed, must have insurance, and must have graduated from the Navy's motorcycle-safety course. The bike also needs to be registered and to have a valid safety inspection.

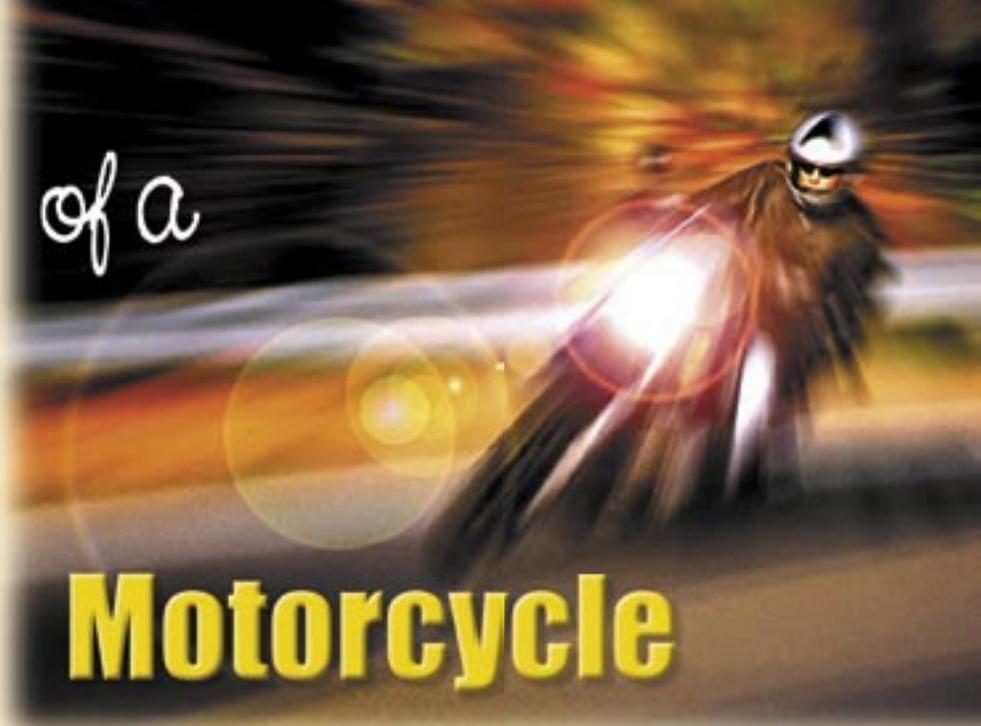
Sailors who operate motorcycles—on or off base—have to meet the requirements outlined in OpNav Instruction 5100.12G (Navy Traffic Safety Program) for standard dress. They must wear a DoT-approved helmet, long trousers, long-sleeved shirt, full-finger gloves, hard-soled shoes (with heels that protect the ankle), protective eyewear, and a reflective vest. These rules are not negotiable, and failure to comply can spell disaster for your health, life or military career. If you disregard OpNav Instruction 5100.12G and are involved in a motorcycle mishap, you can be charged with

failure to follow a general lawful order (Article 92, UCMJ). Also, if you're injured and require convalescent leave, that time can be added on to your expiration of active obligated service.

"How would the Navy know if I broke the rules?" you may be wondering. It's really quite simple. Navy Shore Patrol monitors all police-radio traffic and is notified anytime a service person is involved in a mishap. Shore Patrol responds and files a preliminary report that indicates whether a motorcyclist was wearing the required safety equipment. Every motorcycle crash involves a line-of-duty misconduct investigation, and one of the determining factors is whether the motorcyclist was complying with OpNav Instruction 5100.12G.

My goal isn't to alienate those who own and operate motorcycles. I'm confident most handle the machines safely. Every once in a while, though, I read a report that makes me shake my head in disbelief. For example, a Sailor was traveling an interstate highway going 115 mph. When he started to pass an SUV, he misjudged his speed and distance to the SUV and hit it. That Sailor isn't with us today.

Before you hop on your bike the next time, I urge you to think hard about what could happen. You may be a great driver, but are you willing to bet your life on the skills of all the drivers around you? While you never can eliminate all the risk that comes with riding a motorcycle, you can reduce the danger by being smart. ■



# Sailors Die in Desert

By Ken Testorff,  
Naval Safety Center

If you plan to ride your dirt bike in the desert, where the ambient temperature exceeds 100 degrees Fahrenheit, you'd better dress properly and drink plenty of water. That's good advice, but it comes too late for a couple of fleet Sailors.

Local hikers found the body of a 22-year-old PO3 and reported it to authorities, who then discovered the body of a 29-year-old PO1 a few hours later. The two were about a half-mile apart, dead apparently from heat exposure. The PO3 was found without a shirt or water. Meanwhile, the PO1 was wearing a bandana, protective clothing, and a hydration backpack with water. The autopsy and investigation reports eventually would indicate both victims had been riding when one of the motorcycles became disabled. The victims then walked until both collapsed and died. Toxicology reports were negative for alcohol and drugs.

No records exist showing that either rider had attended a motorcycle-riders safety course.

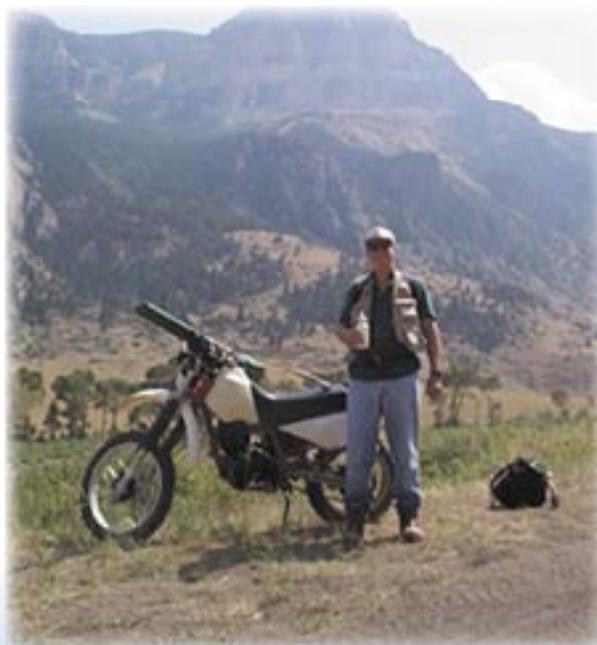
The one thing the duo did right was to notify friends of their intentions to ride dirt bikes in the desert, but the operational risk management ended there. If they had followed all the ORM principles, both probably would be alive today.

The desert can be a wonderful place to ride, but it also can be dangerous if you're not prepared. Every year, people get in trouble, and, as we learned here, some even die in the unforgiving desert environment.

Keep these simple guidelines in mind anytime you decide to go riding in the desert:

- Always carry plenty of water. One gallon per person, per day, should be a minimum, and don't forget to drink it. The water does you no good in your water bottles.

- Know your limitations in the heat and rugged desert terrain, where temperatures can reach 125 degrees Fahrenheit.



When you're riding in the desert, carry plenty of water and don't forget to drink it. The water does you no good in your water bottles.

- Protect yourself from the sun; use a hat and sunscreen.

- Use maps. Detailed topographic maps of an entire park usually are available from visitor centers and local businesses.

- Make sure your bike is well-maintained and dependable. Bring along tools and adequate spares.

- Because of the many thorny plants in the desert, consider using a tire sealant in your inner tubes.

- Don't ride alone; use the buddy system.

- Tell someone else about your trip plans.

- If you find yourself in trouble, don't panic; help soon will be on the way. ■

# 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. ■

In case you haven't heard, shipmates, we're trying to reduce—not increase—mishaps by 50 percent.

## Watch Out for Those Arrow Signs

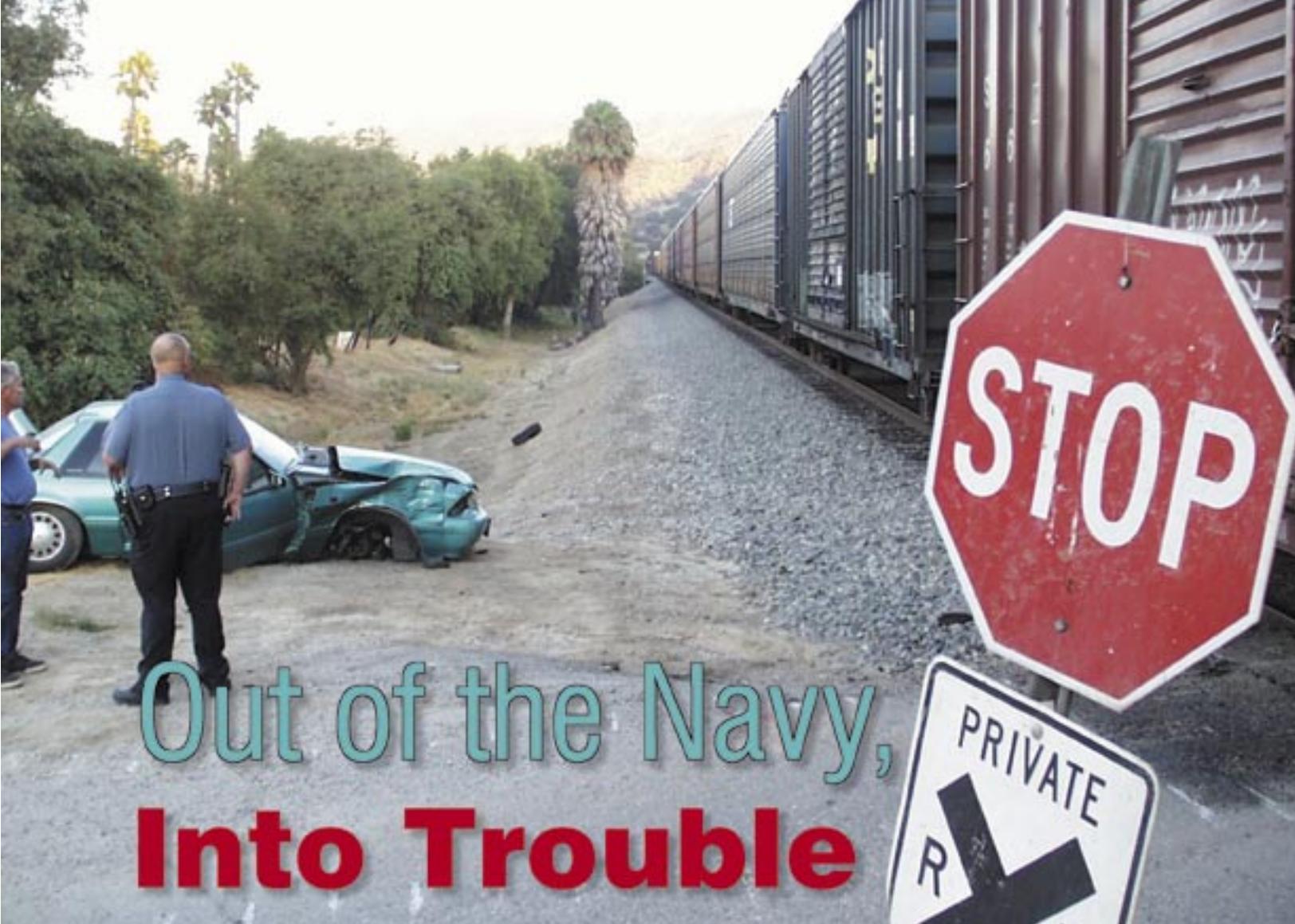
It was 0045, and, despite the fact the roads were wet from a sudden storm that had passed, moonlight now was providing good visibility as a 34-year-old chief petty officer rode his motorcycle down a road. He was going the posted speed limit—45 mph—when he suddenly lost control on the wet pavement and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





# Out of the Navy, Into Trouble

By Ken Testorff,  
Naval Safety Center

“He’s the last Sailor we would have expected to take the risks and chances he took that night. His record of service was spotless. He was a nuclear machinist’s mate on his first sea tour. He had made first class petty officer and was qualified as engineering-watch supervisor. He was leaving the Navy [*on terminal leave*] to return to college and was enrolled at Ohio State University for this fall.”

That’s how one shipmate described the 23-year-old victim of a near-fatal car crash just four days before the end of his obligated service. Now, the PO1 lies in a hospital, in a coma, on life support, and is paralyzed from the waist down.

What happened? The victim was driving in the wee hours one Sunday in June when he hit the 88th car in a 100-car train that was crossing the highway. There were no witnesses to the accident, and

no skid marks were left at the site of the mishap. The intersection was equipped with barriers, which lower when a train is within about two miles of the intersection.

According to the victim’s family, it is common practice for locals to drive around the barriers since they lower several minutes before a train actually crosses the intersection. They believe their son didn’t see the train’s unloaded flatbed cars because they were traveling at a high rate of speed, and they were not lighted. With the relative height of the tracks and the road, the headlights of their son’s vehicle—they believe—would have been above the level of the cars.

The victim’s vehicle actually hit the train twice—once on the front of the car and again on the rear after being spun. The force of the collision and the violent spinning of the car ejected the PO1

through the passenger window, which was lowered at the time. The passenger compartment remained intact; his injuries primarily were the result of being ejected and striking an immovable object.

The PO1 had been out that evening with his parents and later with some friends. Authorities didn't do a BAC analysis, but the friends said they hadn't seen him drinking when they were with him, and he didn't appear drunk. However, he had left a girl before the mishap occurred. Their discussion, which concerned the future of their relationship, had been somewhat emotional. The PO1's father said that, according to the girl, his son was upset but not suicidal or distraught.

The mishap report listed three root causes of the PO1's crash, which happened just one mile from his parents' home:

- Failure to stop at a train crossing, even when the barrier was lowered;
- Failure to wear a seat belt, resulting in ejection from the vehicle; and
- Possible use of alcohol, resulting in impaired judgment.

The report also suggested that a misguided sense of "freedom" after completing his naval obligation could have led the PO1 to do what he did.

The CO of the victim's ship has spoken with his crew several times since this mishap, primarily to keep them posted on the PO1's progress, but also to remind them of the dangers present when they make poor decisions. The CO has vowed to keep stressing the importance of obeying traffic laws to all hands, including the mandatory use of seat belts and the senseless dangers that can result from driving impaired or using poor judgment. ■

*As reported by Operation Lifesaver and the U.S. Department of Transportation, 3,077 high-way-rail collisions occurred in 2002, the most recent year for which final statistics are available. Crossing fatalities that year numbered 356, with 998 injuries reported. The top 15 states in 2002 for crossing incidents also were the states where 67 percent of the fatalities occurred. Those states included Texas, Illinois, California, Indiana, Louisiana, Ohio, Georgia, Florida, Iowa, Wisconsin, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Michigan, and Arkansas. The setting for the preceding article was one of those 15 states.*

# A Matter of D

By JO3 Camy Thompson,  
USS *Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN-71)

“I was heading east on Interstate 64, just before the Chesapeake Boulevard exit, when I lost control of my car. I remember sliding, and the car then flipped over. I reached for my cell phone to dial 911—that’s when I realized my legs were on fire. I just dropped the phone and started to scream.”

That’s how a young Navy woman described her car crash in the early morning hours of Nov. 16.

A pastor who was on the highway that night and witnessed the event said, “We saw a fast-moving car traveling the same direction as us, and, as we went around a bend, the car just hit the wall and started spinning. It then flipped over the divider before coming to rest in the HOV lane.

“I ran across the road and saw that the car was on fire and that all the glass still was intact. By now, another passerby had yelled for me to get a bar and break a window so I could rescue the occupant. I ran back to my car and pulled a hammer from my toolbox.

“When I returned, I heard cries, ‘I’m burning, I’m burning!’ coming from the overturned vehicle. I jumped down over the wall and grabbed the two arms that were reaching out the window.”

About this time, a second man jumped in to help the pastor pull out the occupant. Just as they had freed her from the car, its gas tank exploded, throwing both men and the young Navy woman backward. The two men quickly got back to their feet and pulled her away from the burning vehicle.

“Once we were a safe distance away,” said the pastor, “we rolled the victim around on the ground and used a blanket to smother the flames. Then we lifted her over the wall to the many waiting arms, including those of an off-duty paramedic.”

For the next seven months, the victim was in the burn center of Naval Medical Center, Portsmouth, where she underwent many surgeries—nine in just two months.

# Divine Intervention???

“I think about the situation, and I count my blessings,” she said. “This mishap has changed my life significantly—it has given me a better look at people in general. If someone had told me I was going to be in a wreck like that and have people I didn’t even know save my life, I would have said, ‘No way!’”

Assigned to USS *Theodore Roosevelt* since May 2001, the victim was on board for the record-setting Operation Enduring Freedom deployment, as well as the ship’s most recent Operation Iraqi Freedom deployment. She hopes to report back to TR once fully recovered.

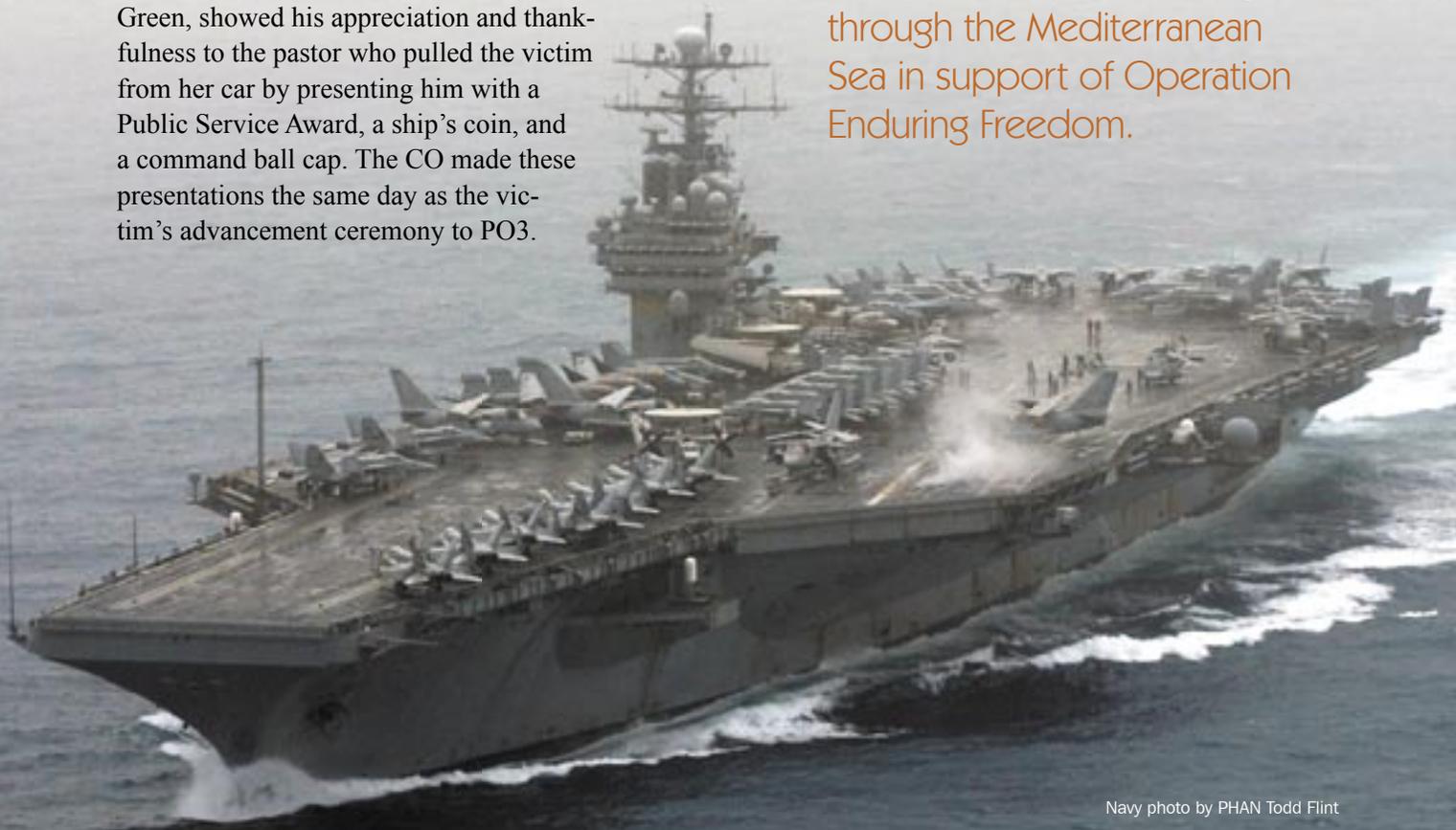
“I really miss the ship and the people,” she said. I made a lot of friends on board, and there aren’t a lot of jobs that allow you to meet people from all over the country like the Navy does.”

The *TR* Commanding Officer, Capt. Turk Green, showed his appreciation and thankfulness to the pastor who pulled the victim from her car by presenting him with a Public Service Award, a ship’s coin, and a command ball cap. The CO made these presentations the same day as the victim’s advancement ceremony to PO3.

“Without his [*the pastor’s*] direct intervention,” said the CO, “the victim might not be with us today. We often think of ourselves as barriers between evil and the American public, but that is what we do—we are Sailors. The pastor did that as a citizen for a Sailor, and that is just incredible to me.” ■

*A slightly different version of this story first appeared in the May 27, 2004, issue of [The Flagship], a weekly newspaper produced by the public affairs staff of Commander Navy Region Mid-Atlantic.*

Once fully recovered, the victim hopes to report back to TR, seen here powering through the Mediterranean Sea in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.



Navy photo by PHAN Todd Flint

# “DRIFTING” *Into* Danger



Expensive rims and colorful paint jobs gleam as a crowd slowly gathers along a deserted stretch of road near a Marine Corps Base in Okinawa. Some cars sit quietly, while the engines of others thrum, waiting in anticipation of being unleashed into the starlit night.

Only a few minutes pass before the loud roar of an engine turning at high revolutions pierces the muted night. This isn't the set of the next film highlighting fast cars and beautiful people; it's another underground event for the illegal street sport of “drifting.”

Although relatively new to North America, this extreme motor sport first was developed in Japan about 12 years ago. The sport combines extreme driving skill with flair and artistry—the drivers negotiate a complicated course at high speeds while in a controlled slide. The competition is judged on execution and style, rather than speed, similar to skateboarding and freestyle motocross.

The idea of drifting is to travel through turns, using the weight of the vehicle (ideally one with a manual transmission; light, rear-wheel drive; and a low, stiff suspension) and traction to slow down. The weight of the car shifts forward while negotiating a turn. Meanwhile, traction is lost at the rear wheels, causing the car to slide. Steering in the direction the car is sliding and administering the right amount of acceleration or popping the clutch come into play while the traction is lost. This action causes the car to drift.

“What ruins the sport and gives it a bad name is when people drift on roads, instead of in controlled environments, and get into accidents.” That comment came from a 19-year-old Okinawa mechanic and drifter himself for more than three years now. One such incident, he went on to

explain, involved a family member from MCAS Iwakuni. No serious injuries occurred, but the event still tainted the 19-year-old's beloved sport.

“The cars go at a very high speed—fast enough to lose control,” said a lance corporal assigned to the provost marshal's office as an accident investigator. “The whole point is to lose traction and slide. The driver never is in complete control.”

Despite their close proximity to these displays of reckless driving, Marines on Okinawa are wise to steer clear of attending or participating. If they don't, they can be found guilty of violating the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and Marine Corps Bases Japan (MCBJ) orders.

According to a Marine Policeman (MP), charged with investigating illegal and irresponsible driving, “Drifting is a form of showmanship that often involves alcohol and can lead to accidents, injuries



Photo by LCpl. Jonathan Teslevich, USMC

A vehicle in the impound lot at Camp Kinser shows the possible effects of drifting that takes place on Okinawa.



Photo by LCpl. Ruben Calderon, USMC

A Nissan Skyline drifts past a curve in a mock course made of cones in an empty parking lot.

and even death for the participants or bystanders. In their driver-improvement and driver-training courses, as well as in their unit-safety briefs, Americans learn they shouldn't be affiliated with these activities in any way."

The MP said drifting, racing and other high-speed acts occur in several areas across Okinawa. "A spot that is popular lately is south of Camp Kinser, among the warehouses of the port," he explained. "In our most recent operation, we spent 160 man-hours doing surveillance, identification checks, and paperwork."

The MP and other Marines with the provost marshal's office are the enforcement arm, guarding against violations of the UCMJ and MCBJ orders. The legal services support section (LSSS) also gets in on the actions against violators.

According to MCBJ Order 1600.1C, "No person shall become involved as an active or passive participant in any illegal drag racing or speed-competition events in Okinawa Prefecture or U.S. government roadways."

As an LSSS paralegal noted, "No drifting violators of this order have come through our office so far this year." He went on to note that any violator of MCBJ Order 1600.1C would fall under Article 92 of the UCMJ.

The maximum punishment for a violation or failure to obey a lawful general order or regulation

is a dishonorable discharge, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, and confinement for two years. "The amount and type of punishment usually depends on the severity of the violation and if any financial damages or injuries are involved," said the paralegal. "Most likely, violators would go before a special or summary court-martial unless someone was killed. It is possible for several charges to pile on top of one another in the case of a severe violation."

It's evident that fear of punishment didn't deter at least one former service member from learning to drift in Okinawa. A little surfing on the Internet turned up the name Ernie Fixmer, a 26-year-old who currently is billed as "one of the top drifters in the United States." The same account allows that he taught himself the sport "during his military days in Okinawa." ■

*Material for this story came from several sources, starting with a May 14, 2004, press release written by LCpl. Jonathan Teslevich of MCB Camp Butler. Another source was a Feb. 6, 2004, press release written by LCpl. Ruben Calderon of MCAS Iwakuni. Finally, some info was taken from a story that appeared in the June 3, 2004, issue of The Flagship, a weekly newspaper produced by the public affairs staff of Commander Navy Region Mid-Atlantic.—Ed.*

# Riding “High on th

By ITC(SW/AW) Wayne Katz,  
USS *Crommelin* (FFG-37)

With the number of motorcycle accidents on the rise Navywide, Navy leadership has sharpened its focus on motorcycle safety to reverse this trend. The Navy probably would prefer just to forbid the use of motorcycles altogether, but everyone knows that idea is impractical.

Safety stand-downs, page 13 entries, captain’s calls, and motorcycle-safety-awareness training are all measures that commands use to promote safe-riding practices. While these measures are helping, Sailors from Pearl Harbor wanted to do more.

In July 2004, following the lead of USS *Paul Hamilton* (DDG-60), the crew of USS *Crommelin* (FFG-37) established its own motorcycle safety club. The goal of this club is to promote safe-riding practices and behavior through the camaraderie of those who enjoy riding.

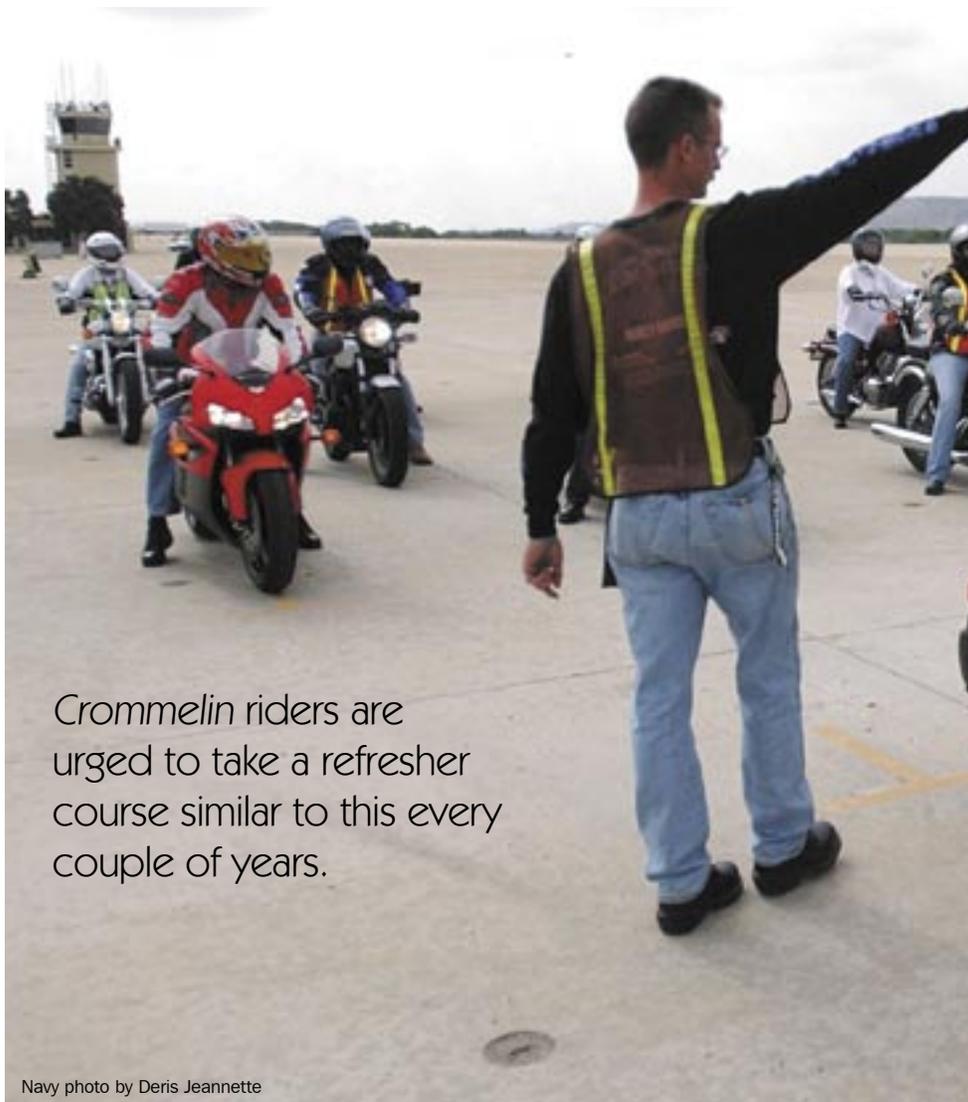
For the most part, motorcycle-safety guidance is promulgated by those who don’t even ride. We thought it might be more effective if riders got together and talked about the importance of personal protective equipment (PPE) and riding and traffic safety from the perspective of those who actually own and ride motorcycles.

“When I was younger, I always wanted to ride motorcycles; it looked like a lot of fun,” said Ltjg. Matthew Bullock, *Crommelin*’s navigator. “Now that I am older, I finally have the opportunity, and I really enjoy it.”

When *Crommelin* riders were asked why they ride, the reasons were quite similar. Here were some of the responses: “It’s fun;” “it’s cheaper on

gas;” “it’s so easy to get a parking space on base;” “you just feel more in control, more aware of your surroundings than in a car;” and “it’s an awesome experience!”

Eighteen active riders and six prospective riders (representing about 10 percent of the crew) currently comprise *Crommelin*’s motorcycle safety club. Meeting once a month, we address various safety topics, including PPE, safe-riding practices, and the use of ORM strategies to minimize the risks of motorcycle riding.



*Crommelin* riders are urged to take a refresher course similar to this every couple of years.

Navy photo by Deris Jeannette

# the Hog” for Safety

While the risks of riding a motorcycle are high, you can reduce the hazards by wearing all the proper PPE—passengers included—and using safe-riding practices. These practices include doing a pre-ride safety check, keeping a vigilant eye on all upcoming traffic, maintaining safe distances from other motorists, and performing periodic maintenance.

While a Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) course is required, we also recommend completing the experienced-rider course every couple of years

to refresh your safe-driving skills. One of the things we do in club meetings is to review the course content and best practices that were taught at the MSF course. This review helps reinforce how best to react to certain types of scenarios that can spell disaster if you don't deal with them correctly.

Because our ship is deployed, all recent meetings have been in the classroom. When we return to our home port (Pearl Harbor), though, we intend to have some club rides to reinforce the techniques necessary for safe commuting. “If you don't

practice these techniques, you won't be effective in using them when you really need them,” said Ltjg. Bullock.

We also have created an intranet page, which we use to display updated club news, as well as base and Internet information on motorcycle safety. Another function of the webpage is to provide a forum for more experienced riders to share the lessons they have learned the hard way. My crash story is there—the one about a pothole that got the best of me while traveling 40 mph. The helmet that saved my life was displayed on the mess desks and then at the ship's pre-deployment leave-and-upkeep safety stand-down.

By taking ownership of motorcycle safety on behalf of mission readiness and personal safety, the crew of *Crommelin* hopes to minimize or even eliminate motorcycle incidents. ■

*The author is president of Crommelin's motorcycle club. If you would like to start a club or want ideas, he will welcome your e-mail. Send it to [katz@crommelin.navy.mil](mailto:katz@crommelin.navy.mil).*



# “...Till Death Do Us Part”

They were newlyweds—on their honeymoon, as a matter of fact—and probably feeling high on life. They certainly couldn’t have known what fate awaited them that July morning in central Washington state.

It was about 2 a.m. when the 21-year-old Sailor and his 22-year-old bride climbed into their SUV to leave a friend’s campsite. This campsite was located off a narrow, forest-service road that had no guardrails or lights and was bordered by a 150-foot cliff.

The Sailor had consumed about six cans of beer in a four-hour period (the mishap report listed his BAC as 0.12), and neither he, nor his wife, buckled their seat belts before starting back to their own campsite. While trying to turn around, the Sailor misjudged the distance from the side of the road to the cliff and drove over the edge. The SUV tumbled several times before coming to rest in a river below. Both occupants were ejected from the vehicle.

The friends who witnessed the tragedy hurried to a nearby ranger station and called for help. Sheriff’s deputies and search-and-rescue personnel quickly arrived and scaled down the cliffs to the victims, in the dark and without waiting for proper equipment. They found the couple at the bottom of the gorge.

The Sailor had died from a massive head injury—probably on impact. Meanwhile, his wife barely was conscious and breathing and had a very weak pulse. Unfortunately, nothing could be done for her, given the serious head and upper-body trauma she had suffered, and she, too, died after 20 minutes of first aid and CPR.

How much did alcohol contribute to this tragedy? According to the mishap report, the Sailor had been having four or five drinks daily. Records also show he had had one alcohol-related inci-



dent before going on leave. He was involved in a boating accident in which he had a BAC of 0.106. He had been scheduled for follow-up screening in the substance-abuse rehabilitation program to determine if he met the criteria for alcohol abuse or dependency.

Another possible contributing factor is that the Sailor hadn’t owned or operated a car during his overseas tour of duty. Before going overseas, he had driven one for about five years.

Finally, one has to ask: Could these young newlyweds have survived this crash if they had been wearing their seat belts? Consider this incident that occurred in California just two days after these newlyweds were killed.

A 20-year-old woman awoke just as the speeding car in which she was riding plunged over a 500-foot cliff. The male 22-year-old driver and a male 20-year-old passenger, who weren’t wearing seat belts, died when they were thrown from the car near the top of the cliff.

The car ended up about 200 feet down the steep ravine, where the young woman was able to unbuckle her seat belt and free herself from the wreckage. She then climbed the near-vertical slope,

summoned help, and was flown to a hospital. Doctors described her injuries as moderate.

As reported by the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA), seat belts have prevented 135,000 fatalities and 3.8 million injuries in the past 26 years, thus saving \$585 billion in medical and other costs. If all vehicle occupants had used seat belts during that period, nearly 315,000 deaths and 5.2 million injuries could have been prevented, at a cost savings of \$913 billion.

Figures like these, coupled with the fact that motor-vehicle crashes still are the leading cause of death among military personnel [65 percent of Sailors and 46 percent of Marines in FY04], forced Navy commands around the world to take action in May 2004. They partnered with the NHTSA and National Safety Council in the “Click It or Ticket” national enforcement campaign aimed at seat-belt violators. This campaign ran throughout the critical days of summer 2004. ■

## But for a Seat Belt...



**A** Navy lieutenant was elated to be home for the 2003 holidays after spending nearly two years in harm’s way aboard a ship that had been in and out of the Persian Gulf more times than his mother wanted to know. To commemorate his return, his family had planned a special reunion in Las Vegas.

All was going according to plan. The lieutenant had arrived at the airport, where his fiancée

met him. His parents and favorite aunt and uncle were waiting for them at a casino in Las Vegas. And, topping off the reunion was a special gift for his mom: rare concert tickets to a performance by Canadian diva Celine Dion.

Unfortunately, tragedy would steal the show. The lieutenant was so excited he forgot to fasten his seat belt after stopping for gas just outside Las Vegas. Then came sudden brake lights, and the

SUV the lieutenant was driving veered and rolled across the highway. After having survived nearly two years of continuous overseas duty, the 30-year-old lieutenant was thrown from the vehicle and died instantly—just five minutes away from the reunion. His fiancée, who was wearing a seat belt, suffered a broken nose and bruises.

As advertised in a July 2004 press release from the National Safety Council, “Strong state seat-belt laws still are the best way to save lives.” That press release was issued to highlight the 20th anniversary of a watershed year for highway safety. In 1984, a key federal rule was implemented that led to air

Motor-vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for the military, outweighing other causes, including training mishaps and combat. Sixty-five percent of FY04 Navy fatalities were related to private motor vehicles, according to Naval Safety Center data.

“While we are doing everything we can to protect families from unpredictable threats, we must continue to address the most predictable and leading risks our families and military face every day—traffic mishaps,” said Capt. Bruce Crisler, then-director of the shore safety programs at the Safety Center.

*As advertised in a July 2004 press release from the National Safety Council (NSC), “Strong state seat-belt laws still are the best way to save lives.”*

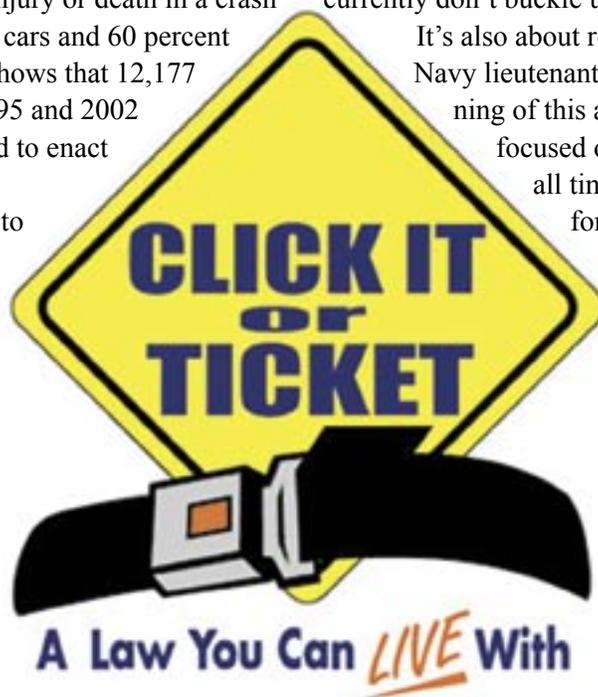
bags in vehicles. The same year saw the first state seat-belt law enacted, and a federal law was signed, resulting in national implementation of a 21-year-old drinking age. New data estimates that 190,000 fewer traffic deaths have occurred since those landmark measures became effective.

According to a study by the National Safety Council, states that have enacted primary seat-belt laws since 1995 experienced, on average, a 15-percent increase in belt use. Seat belts are proven to reduce the risk of serious injury or death in a crash by 45 percent in passenger cars and 60 percent in light trucks. The study shows that 12,177 lives were lost between 1995 and 2002 because 30 states had failed to enact strong seat-belt-use laws.

As noted in a message to Navy flag officers, RAdm. Dick Brooks, the Naval Safety Center commander, said, “We are still experiencing far too many casualties from these kinds of mishaps. It’s not just about numbers or meeting some numerical goal, it’s about preserving the most precious resource we have—our human resource.”

The 2004 “Click It or Ticket” campaign, which the Navy participated in, relied on periods of intense enforcement of seat-belt laws, coupled with aggressive advertising and media outreach, to let people know about the effort. For many drivers who don’t wear seat belts, research has shown that the threat of a ticket is a greater inducement to buckle up than the threat of injury or death. However, it’s not just about writing tickets—it’s about changing the behavior of would-be violators who currently don’t buckle up.

It’s also about reminding people—like the Navy lieutenant mentioned in the beginning of this article—that they must stay focused on situational awareness at all times. In his excitement, he forgot to buckle up one time, and he paid for the mistake with his life. These words of his mother say it best, “I was so afraid for him the whole time all this war bit was going on. Never would I think he would come home and be in this senseless accident.” ■



# Rap: Another Tool in the Battle With Drunk Driving

By JO2(SW) Jerry Foltz,  
USS *George Washington* (CVN-73)

The Navy often relies on training videos and directives on serious topics to help keep personnel from harm's way. One of those messages deals with the avoidable catastrophe of drinking and driving. But one thing these training media fail to provide is personality and a fresh appeal to young Sailors.

How do you get such a strong point to a Sailor in a way that has not been done already, or to reach a new market and give the same message a new life?

USS *George Washington's* Chief Culinary Specialist (SW/AW) Brian Ware may have just what the doctor or, in this case, commanding officer, ordered. Ware utilized his personal hobby of rapping to create a lyrical message of inspiration and consequences that a young audience can feel and respect. Called "T-B-Y-D" (Think B4 U Drink), the song urges Sailors not to risk their lives with the needless vehicular tragedies related to drunk driving.

Ware wrote the song in 1996 as an MS2, after learning of fellow shipmates who were involved in drunk-driving incidents while stationed in Hawaii. Four years later, the song was released on a private CD called "B. Ware 'Coming at Ya'."

Ware was watching SITE-TV training on responsible driving when he thought, "What better way to get that message across than through my song?"

A few days later, *GW's* commanding officer, Capt. Garry R. White, was holding a televised Captain's Call when he said, "Drastic measures are needed—if anyone has some ideas, present them to me."

Those two words—"drastic measures"—were all it took for Ware to set his idea in motion. With the help of shipmates, he created a special CD and made enough copies for all hands to take one with them as they departed the quarterdeck after arriving home for the holidays. Each crew member also took along a *GW* "Safe Cab Card," which lists the phone numbers of cab companies in the Hampton

Roads area Sailors can call when they've been drinking.

*Another Sailor who's looking out for the interests of young shipmates today is AO3 Jesse Wallen of HS-6 at NAS North Island. Here's what Derek Nelson, executive assistant of the Communications and Marketing Department at the Naval Safety Center recently wrote.—Ed.*

Aviation Ordnanceman Third Class Jesse Wallen had been to plenty of safety stand-downs by the time he started wondering, "Why do these things have to be so boring?"

It wasn't that the topics covered were unimportant, or that the information being passed wasn't useful. It was just that the media was stale and repetitive. Maybe it was a lecture by a speaker who wasn't very dynamic, or maybe the video being shown was outdated. Wallen saw an opportunity to do something original—with music.

"I wanted to make it a little more exciting," he recalls. "So after one of our stand-downs, a buddy and I got on stage and did a little rap. Usually, after a stand-down, people are in a hurry to leave, but they were staying around to listen. I thought, 'Hmm, maybe I've got something here.'" He bounced the idea off the squadron safety officer and the skipper and got their support.

The result is "It's All Over Now," which deals with car wrecks (the leading killer of Sailors and Marines) and handguns. The song would fit right in on MTV. The subject matter is violent: preventable mishaps that claim the lives of so many shipmates every year. These mishaps, he writes, force the Navy to "be wasting so much money on funeral after funeral after funeral." ■

*To download or listen to "It's All Over Now," or to get a copy of the CD, visit [www.safetycenter.navy.mil/articles/allovernow.htm](http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/articles/allovernow.htm).*

# The Perils of



By MR1 John Mapp,  
SIMA Norfolk

*(We congratulate the author on this winning entry in the Sea&Shore story contest that, as advertised on our website, ended Oct. 1, 2004.—Ed.)*

**T**raffic safety applies to everything and everyone on the roads, including bicyclists, pedestrians, and even in-line skaters. Just ask the hero of the following tragedy:

Ah, to be young, single, and in Europe. This truly joyful mixture, in concert with plentiful liberty, had our hero high on life. What more could one ask?

Complete invulnerability and immunity from the laws of physics would have been nice.

Our hero (henceforth referred to as FN Tweedle) really was enjoying his tour of duty overseas. He had money in his pocket, liberty for the whole weekend, a fancy personal CD player (with matching headphones, yet), and a newly purchased pair of in-line skates.

All was well that fateful Saturday afternoon in December.

Fireman Tweedle zipped merrily hither and yon among the pre-holiday crowds in Italy, listening to his favorite tunes. He was clad dashing in a black sweater and black jeans, with a really spiffy pair of sunglasses. He could just imagine the envious thoughts of his shipmates as they saw him zooming about.

Some of those shipmates probably should have grabbed FN Tweedle and warned him about skating in the midst of traditionally insane Italian traffic. They also might have talked to him about covering his ears with headphones—however stylish—when every sense must be on full alert to avert possible disaster. As evening descended, a few shipmates even might have put in a word or two about possibly removing the dark glasses.

Alas, none of those things happened. The facts of what happened instead are drawn from the police report and FN Tweedle's own statements later.

This particular Mediterranean town had a large hill—or perhaps a small mountain—up which the tiny, paved thoroughfares the Italians laughingly refer to as “roads” wound and twisted. Fireman Tweedle found himself far up the hill when the last local watering hole closed its doors. He probably gazed down the hill, his eyes wandering among the twisted stucco canyons, toward the NATO pier

# IN-LINE SKATING in Italy

where the ship was moored, and thought, “This is gonna be soooooo cool!”

Our stalwart hero forthwith donned his blades, pulled his sunglasses down over his eyes, fired up the old CD crooner, and began to roll downhill.

I know you’re probably thinking he built up too much speed and wiped out around a corner or perhaps punched a cartoon-silhouette cutout through the wall of an Italian home on the way down. But neither happened. Fireman Tweedle was an experienced lunatic—he moderated his speed to what he felt comfortable with. Kudos!

Sadly, FN Tweedle seems to have been born lacking the ORM part of his brain. I’m talking about the little voice that asks questions like, “What’s the worst thing that can happen if I do this?”

He never thought that his black-on-black attire might make him less visible, especially on a dark night. Ditto for the sunglasses, which work like a charm against the rays of the sun but are far less than useful after sundown. He also probably never thought that wearing headphones and deafening himself with music might isolate him a bit too much from his surroundings. It’s further doubtful he considered the possibility that the—let us say—“energetic” Italian drivers are not known for adhering to the rules of the road.

And so, as our hero was slowing slightly to make a sweeping turn just ahead, he didn’t notice a young Italian national on his scooter a few yards behind him. This scooter pilot, as Italian drivers are prone to do, blipped his throttle and cut to FN Tweedle’s left, intent on taking the inside of the corner. The unaware FN Tweedle also cut for the inside of the same corner.

All together now (in the spirit of the season), we’ll do this to the tune of “Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer”: “Sailor got run over by a moped...”

The Polizia Stradale (the Italian version of the highway patrol) arrived on the scene and quickly

determined that FN Tweedle was an American.

They thus hauled him back to the ship and deposited him into the caring hands of the ship’s CDO, who, understandably, was less than overjoyed.

After all, he had to crawl out of a nice, warm rack in the wee hours of the morning to deal with the local police. The CDO awakened the ship’s doctor, who examined FN Tweedle and pronounced him fit—well, sort of. The only problem was a broken left leg and (apparently) a complete lack of survival instincts.

Our forlorn fireman went to the nearest medical facility, which happened to be in Naples, an hour or so away. Doctors there repaired his broken leg, but he never could walk properly again. Six months later, he received a medical discharge.

The ship held all-hands training the day after FN Tweedle was carried off in an ambulance. Before this incident, the CO specifically had forbidden any of his Sailors to ride motorcycles or scooters. Renting cars also was forbidden. Now, in-line skating, bicycling and any other conveyance beyond hoofin’ it have been added to the “forbidden” list.

It probably never occurred to the skipper that anyone, least of all someone in his own well-trained crew, would do something so dumb.

What’s the lesson in this story? Simply declaring certain activities off-limits is not enough. The entire command, from the skipper all the way down to the newest swabbie, needs constant reminders about staying aware of the potential hazards in everyday activities. Using occupational risk management should be an automatic process by the time Sailors get to their first ship. Those who demonstrate less than adequate concern for their own physical well-being should be counseled repeatedly on the subject until it becomes automatic. ■

*The author has been medically discharged from the Navy.*

# Best Practices

## Reducing Traffic Mishaps

Are you losing Sailors in PMV and motorcycle crashes? Is drunk driving part of the problem? If the answer to either or both of these questions is “yes,” here are some tools fleet units are using successfully to drive down the numbers:

### Aboard USS *Reuben James* (FFG-57)

During the quarter ending Sept. 30, 2004, this ship held classroom training for all 18 of its Sailors who ride motorcycles. This training focused on safe practices, Department of the Navy regulations on motorcycle-specific PPE, courses available, and proper licensing. The ship aggressively worked to ensure all Sailors who ride motorcycles have completed or are scheduled to complete the required training. The ship also scheduled the motorcycle-safety program manager for the Motorcycle-Instructor course. That course will enable the ship to be self-sufficient and to conduct its own in-depth, motorcycle-safety training.

Training on off-duty safety for alcohol awareness, as well as leisure activities, was given to *Reuben James* Sailors on a continuous basis at every level, from divisional training to all-hands calls. Taking the initiative and displaying strong leadership, the First Class Petty Officers’ Association implemented a program for Sailors to be issued taxi vouchers. This program ensures the availability of a safe ride home for any Sailor drinking on liberty without a designated driver. Those who take advantage of this program only have a small bill to pay at the end of the month. The ship published steady reminders about the taxi vouchers in the Plan of the Day.

### Aboard USS *Curts* (FFG-38)

Although deployed, this ship simply shifted its training focus from everyday driving complacency to loss of driving proficiency. *Curts* scheduled a CHP officer to visit the ship before its return to

homeport (San Diego). It also scheduled a Florida officer to visit the ship before a mid-deployment port visit in Mayport.

All motorcyclists aboard *Curts* are identified, and quotas are pursued for everyone who still requires an approved motorcycle-safety course. The ship’s traffic-safety program manager interviews each motorcyclist to ensure his/her understanding and compliance with standing regulations.

### Aboard USS *John L. Hall* (FFG-32)

This ship took an innovative approach to identifying high-risk/problem drinkers with an electronic polling method that uses the group e-mail features of Microsoft Outlook. The command DAPA developed a confidential, cost-effective, and time-saving method of polling the crew individually to find those who felt they had a drinking problem.

With the DAPA’s method, Sailors used the voting-button option in Microsoft Outlook to choose “yes,” “no” or “maybe.” All hands received the note, selected their response, and returned it



People who drink and drive...



...cause crashes like this...

to the command DAPA, who was the only person who knew how each participating crew member responded. Because most Sailors today are computer savvy, they felt comfortable using the voting-button function. This survey turned up 11 people who otherwise might not have come to the command's attention until after they had had an alcohol-related mishap. All 11 received counseling and assistance.

For detailed information on using the voting-button option in Microsoft Outlook, enter the keywords "voting button" in Microsoft Outlook help.

#### Aboard USS Shreveport (LPD-12)

One of the most impressive and influential tools this ship used was putting the wrecked car from a drunk-driving crash at the foot of the brow. A local insurance company donated the car, and every crew member had to look at it as they left the ship each day on leave or liberty. The car was a constant reminder of the severe and potentially lethal consequences of a totally preventable mishap.

The CO capitalized on this reminder with an alcohol-deglamorization program as a command-wide incentive to stay out of trouble. All divisions were challenged to attain zero alcohol-related incidents during the post-deployment stand-down and subsequent yard period. Zero incidents earned division members a day off.

#### Aboard USS Benfold (DDG-65)

At the start of CY2004, this ship's chain of command noticed an alarming increase in alcohol and drug violations. They subsequently invited

the Naval Consolidated Brig, Miramar, to hold a decision-making workshop for all hands. The brig brought individuals to share their dramatic stories about how one bad decision had changed their seemingly normal lives forever.

#### Aboard USS Mustin (DDG-89)

To encourage Sailors not to get behind the wheel after they have been drinking, this ship grants alcohol-awareness days off to duty sections that stay incident-free for 90 days. The results have been a 60-percent reduction in alcohol-related incidents from last year.

#### Aboard USS Gonzalez (DDG-66)

This ship hosted a visit by a Virginia Beach Police officer, experienced in drunk-driving accidents. He showed a slide presentation of real

Photo used with permission



accident scenes related to alcohol, excessive speed, and nighttime driving. The officer also opened the floor to questions related to Virginia driving laws. Crew feedback from the presentation was overwhelmingly positive, and, at last check,

...in which innocent victims lose their lives. This 18-year-old Marine was injured seriously and later died when a drunk driver, who was fleeing from the police in a stolen vehicle, slammed into a military shuttle that was stopped for a red light. Four other Marines in the shuttle van with this victim also were injured badly.



Navy photo by PH3 Jason R. Zalasky

A Virginia state trooper briefs Sailors aboard USS *George Washington* (CVN-73) on the dangers of drinking and driving as the ship prepares to return home from a six-month deployment.

the ship had had no driving-related incidents since this brief.

Another program that has had a positive impact on driver safety is the three hours of instruction the shipboard AAA driving instructor provides each month to junior members of the command.

#### Aboard USS *Essex* (LHD-2)

The traffic-safety program aboard this ship yielded zero lost/light-duty workdays from traffic mishaps. Crewmen, as well as dependents who wish to participate, attend driver-education training. Anyone involved in a traffic mishap must re-take the course.

The ship's motorcycle riders are tracked meticulously in a database, which reveals all of them have attended the Motorcycle Safety Foundation Rider course.

As the numbers show, these two examples of intrusive leadership work.

#### Aboard USS *Leyte Gulf* (CG-55)

This ship's return from deployment brought a renewed concern for off-duty safety. During stand-down, the ship lost a shipmate who was hit by a car while crossing the street. Moving violations and DUI convictions also increased.

The CO addressed these issues with all hands

and stressed the importance of safety vigilance at work and at play. The ship then issued taxi cards to all personnel and maintained a petty-cash fund to cover emergency fares. They also pursued safety-training opportunities provided by civilian professionals, initially arranging a Street Smart presentation, which addressed DUI prevention and driving safety for a target audience of 19-to-26-year-olds.

#### Aboard USS *Vincennes* (CG-49)

Besides having a taxi fund as a safeguard against DUIs, this ship maintains a breathalyzer on the quarterdeck, which is used strictly as a tool to identify Sailors who may need extra education or treatment. Different BACs result in varying actions and provides a trip-wire for a drunk watch being required, as well as the member having a medical evaluation and/or DAPA screening.

*Vincennes* mandated a drinking limit of 0.13—the basis that flags a Sailor as possibly at risk of hurting himself or others or committing an act that results in a liberty incident. Research of incidents that have occurred shows that Sailors involved usually have a BAC of 0.15 or higher. Introduction of the breathalyzer program and the mandated responsible drinking limit has produced a considerable reduction in the number of alcohol-related incidents.

Each division chief aboard *Vincennes* also has his/her Sailors complete a liberty POA&M before entering port or before the start of a weekend. This POA&M requires the Sailors to explain what their liberty plans are, whom they are going out with, and how much they plan to drink. The POA&M can be tailored for any port; it addresses the drinking age of the country being visited and lists MWR functions available.

The Sailors then individually sit down for a one-on-one interview with the LPO, chief, and/or division officer to discuss their liberty plans. If a Sailor does have an incident, the entire chain of command must report to the CO the next morning and explain what could have been done to prevent the incident.

#### Aboard USS *Tarawa* (LHA-1)

This ship's safety department developed a motorcycle database that tracks current information

on all known motorcycle operators among the crew. This database contains such information as the date a Sailor completes a DoD motorcycle-rider course; the date a Sailor's driver's license is endorsed for motorcycles; the make, model and displacement of a Sailor's motorcycle; a Sailor's riding experience; and how he/she plans to use the motorcycle (e.g., daily commute, recreational, off-road, day/night operation).

All departments ensure that the information entered is accurate, complete and updated for all personnel through a LAN share-drive-accessed database. Any gains or losses within a department are monitored by the safety department and are adjusted accordingly in the database. The safety department uses this database to track *Tarawa's* newly required motorcycle-refresher training for all motorcycle operators.

Upon initial check-in, *Tarawa* Sailors are briefed on Navy and command policy for motorcycle operators. The safety department enters all incoming riders into the database, then has them read and sign a locally generated motorcycle-rider



Navy photo by Matthew J. Thomas

Shipboard Sailors watch a paramedic demonstrate an emergency-medical procedure he often has to perform at the scene of a car crash. Sponsored by Anheuser-Busch Companies, Inc., free *Street Smart* presentations like this one are being shown around the fleet as a means of educating Sailors about making responsible choices.



Navy photo by JO1 James G. Pinsky

A ship's CO addresses the crew before setting liberty. Among the usual topics is drinking and driving.

page 13. All current motorcycle operators have the same page 13 in their service jackets.

To further educate and enhance the skills of motorcycle operators, the ship initiated a requirement that all current riders have advanced training. The safety department handles all scheduling for the advanced course, which will be renewed every three years. This three-year refresher requirement coincides with base-sticker renewal periodicity and the average sea/shore rotations.

On a periodic basis, the *Tarawa* CO meets with all motorcycle riders to review safety lessons learned. This forum helps maintain situational awareness of the inherent danger of riding motorcycles and reduces the attitude of "it can't happen to me." ■

# Another Dumb Trick



By Ken Testorff,  
Naval Safety Center

A 20-year-old seaman stands on the roof of his PMV with his civilian friend accelerating to about 20 or 25 mph. Suddenly, the seaman loses his footing and falls onto the pavement. Injuries include a closed head injury, a skull fracture, and contusions.

The victim is taken to a local hospital, where he's admitted to the ICU under the care of a neurosurgeon for approximately three weeks. He subsequently is transferred to a naval hospital, evaluated by neurology, and placed on convalescent leave. Doctors estimate his lost work time at 45 days, including 25 in the hospital. They also say he could be partly disabled.

Alcohol use is suspected but never confirmed in this case.

In another incident, an AEAR and an AEAN go drinking one Saturday at 1000. The AEAR

consumes several drinks of two different kinds of alcohol. After playing video games at the AEAN's residence, the two go for a drive about 2015 in the AEAN's pickup. Fifteen minutes later, the AEAN is doing donuts with the AEAR riding on top of the truck cab. Suddenly, the AEAR gets thrown off, but he doesn't hit the ground right away. Instead, he first collides with an electrical box.

Injuries include fractures of thoracic and cervical vertebrae, a skull fracture, bleeding under the lining of the brain,

and nerve damage. The AEAR subsequently suffers visual defects, memory loss, and speech problems. Doctors aren't sure if he'll be partly disabled for the rest of his life.

The AEAN records a BAC of 0.133, but the hospital won't release the BAC figure for the AEAR.

Elsewhere, a DC3 and a DCFN stop at a local supermarket one evening and pick up some items for an upcoming underway period. They leave the market at 0015, with the DCFN riding on the car's hood (lying stomach-down, facing the windshield). Everything is OK until the DC3 hits a speed bump at about 20 to 25 mph in the parking lot. The DCFN then falls off and hits his head, suffering massive head trauma, a broken ankle, and a loss of consciousness.

The DC3 immediately stops the car, checks on the DCFN, and calls the ship's quarterdeck to report the incident and to ask for assistance. Min-



utes later, two police units, responding to a different call, notice the DC3 standing over the DCFN. Emergency units are dispatched. A breathalyzer test shows the underage DC3's BAC is below the legal limit; the DCFN's BAC isn't checked because of his condition.

The DCFN is taken to a local hospital, where he undergoes emergency surgery. Afterward, he remains comatose. Four days later, when all family members have been notified of his condition, the DCFN is removed from life support and dies.

What do they call such stupid stunts? The most common term is "car surfing." It first became popular with teenagers in the mid-1980s, as they sought to mimic scenes from the films "Footloose" and "Teen Wolf." A rash of mishaps followed, and the activity disappeared for a while. Young people resumed the daredevil acts, though, with the advent of such popular movies as "The Matrix," the stunt TV show "Jackass," and the video game "Grand Theft Auto."

This high-risk behavior takes other forms, too. Some participants kneel on a car's rear bumper and hold onto perhaps a spoiler, while the car zips

down the street. Car surfers also sometimes ride a skateboard or in-line skates after latching onto the back of a moving vehicle.

Why do young people do this crazy stuff? For some, it's just another way to get the adrenaline pumping. For others, it's to show off for their friends. While admitting to the dangers of car surfing, one teenager said he probably just would laugh if a friend grabbed hold of his car. "Us kids are stupid," he remarked, adding, "I'm not going to tell someone not to do it. I'll beep my horn and keep going."

Serious injuries or death are distinct possibilities anytime someone goes car surfing. As an ER doctor noted, the human body isn't built to go 50 mph while standing on a car's hood, being towed on a skateboard, or hanging onto a car's bumper. Just about every part of the body is at risk, with the central nervous system most in jeopardy. "If a fall from the car doesn't hurt you," said the doctor, "there's always a chance another vehicle might hit you. Going 25 mph or more while doing such sports as biking, skateboarding or skiing should satisfy the needs of thrill-seekers. Car surfing, on the other hand, isn't much of a sport—it's stupid."

Speaking of stupid, here's one more tale that should have you shaking your head in disbelief.

A PO3 and four other Sailors load a government light-service support vehicle (LSSV) with

*As an ER doctor noted, the human body isn't built to go 50 mph while standing on a car's hood, being towed on a skateboard, or hanging onto a car's bumper.*

supplies for an MWR event. The load consists of display items to showcase Navy diving, a dog-tag machine, various T-shirts and hats to sell, and a cooler that contains various snacks and beverages, including beer.

All five personnel then attend a previously scheduled luncheon at a local pizza parlor, where two of them each consume two glasses of beer. The PO3 and other two Sailors each drink lemonade. When the luncheon is over, all five climb into the LSSV and head to the MWR event, with the PO3 driving—"smart move," you're probably saying, but read on. I promise you'll have second thoughts.

En route to their destination, the group stops for fuel and snacks and to change drivers. The PO3 tells the others he intends to have a beer from the cooler. Some of them see him at the cooler, but none see him actually drink a beer.

When they all climb back into the vehicle, the PO3 sits in the right-rear passenger seat. The group travels about another four hours before one of the Sailors says, "I could go for a beer."

The PO3 responds, "I could do a mission impossible."

The other Sailor shoots back, "Bet you a buck you won't."

At that time, the PO3 rapidly starts exiting the vehicle through his window, while the LSSV is traveling 75 mph. He is reaching for the cooler in the back when he loses his grip and falls, hitting the highway. The driver stops, and two Sailors begin CPR, as another one calls 911. Emergency personnel arrive moments later and call for a life

flight. Before the victim can be taken away, though, he dies at the scene.

What leads people to make errors in judgment and do such dangerous acts? Studies have shown that incorrect decisions are made mainly during a driver's first years on the road. Let's face it—people of all ages occasionally have crazy ideas. The telltale difference lies in how or if we respond to those ideas. It's common knowledge that most youths lack the ability to control their impulses, behind the wheel or otherwise. With experience, though, comes appreciation for the consequences of our uncontrolled actions.

These studies also have found a relationship between risk-taking in driving and one's perception of the risks involved. Individual drivers are apt to rate risk-taking according to the faith they have in their ability to cope safely with different dangers. Thus, a key factor can be a young driver's exaggerated belief in his/her mental skills and ability to control the vehicle.

An important point to consider here is what can happen when people get behind the wheel. If they pursue their baser impulses while in control of a one- or two-ton, gas-powered guided missile with power windows and a CD player, nothing or no one is safe. ■

## An Easter Miracle

By Brion Hall,  
NAS Brunswick, Maine

**O**n Easter Sunday, my girlfriend and I were coming back to Topsham on Interstate 95 from visiting her parents. It was a dry and sunny afternoon. We were south of Bangor, just past Pittsfield, when a car passed us doing between 90 and 100 mph.

As the car came back into the travel lane, it went onto the shoulder, then off the road. Anyone who ever has traveled that section of I-95 knows that the roadway is elevated about 15 to 20 feet. The car went down the bank into a drainage ditch, where it hit water that sprayed as high as the trees.

The car then hit a piece of exposed granite ledge, causing it to cartwheel end-over-end about 20 feet high in the air. The car must have flipped six times before it touched the ground again, then just disappeared into the woods, still tumbling end-over-end.

My heart was in my throat. I remember thinking, "There's no way anybody could have survived that." It was like the high-speed chase and wrecks you see on the TV show "Cops" or, better yet, a NASCAR crash, with pieces of car going in every direction.



The victim in this story was driving a car similar to this one.

I immediately pulled over, figuring my experience as a search-and-rescue swimmer in the Navy and my extensive first-aid training could help. I told my girlfriend to call 911 as I got out of the car. Another driver (a young girl, maybe 18 years old) and I ran down the bank toward the woods. After we had waded across the drainage ditch and entered the woods, I told her to start looking for people who might have been ejected. At this point, I noticed the young girl was crying, probably because she was so scared.

It took us about three minutes to reach the car because the woods were so thick, and the car was so far in. When we finally reached it, all that remained was a ball of twisted metal, covered with tree branches. Pieces of the car were strewn everywhere. All the glass was gone, and three of the four wheels were missing. The fourth wheel still was attached, but the aluminum rim was shattered.

It took me a second to figure out which was the driver's side because what was left of the car had come to rest upside down. It barely resembled a car any more. I remember pulling away branches so I could get to the opening that once was a window—the opening now measured about 15-by-20 inches. As I knelt down to look inside the car, I said a little prayer, afraid of what I was about to see. I just knew everyone would be dead.

A woman about 50 was hanging upside down in the driver's seat, still buckled up. She wasn't

moving, and her eyes were closed. As I reached in to check her pulse, she moved, and I asked if she was OK. She responded, "Oui" (she was a French Canadian from Quebec). I told her help was on the way to get her out of the car. Just then, though, she unbuckled her seat belt and dropped to the roof. I asked if she was alone, and she said she was. She

then stuck her feet out the opening and climbed out, with only minimal help from me.

The young girl and I helped her to the side of the road, where I put my coat around her and had her lie down. I then elevated her feet to treat for possible shock and asked her what had happened.

The car then hit a piece of exposed granite ledge, causing it to cartwheel end-over-end about 20 feet high in the air.

"I was reaching down for my CD case on the passenger floor," she said.

I kept her talking until the EMTs arrived (about 10 minutes later). Their check revealed only a small nick on her forehead from a piece of flying glass. I gave my statement to a state trooper and left without so much as a thank you.

I believe the only thing that saved that lady was the seat belt she was wearing. The lesson here is always to buckle up when you get in a car. Otherwise, there may not be another miracle on Easter Sunday or any other day. ■

*The author is a NavOSH specialist in the NAS Brunswick, Maine safety office.*

# Bases Ban Hand-He

Photo courtesy AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety



regulations aboard some bases. Specifically, the officials are banning hand-held cell phones from use while driving on base. Motorists either must have a hands-free device or park off the roadway to use their hand-held devices. Violations draw different penalties, depending on where they occur.

On July 1, 2004 (with a 31-day grace period), violators at all Naval District Washington (NDW) installations became subject to a \$100 fine

**A**n E-2 was typing a test message on his cell phone while driving, crossed a median, and hit a large tree head-on. Among his injuries were a broken right ankle, broken right femur, broken pelvis, broken left hip, and multiple lacerations to his face and spleen. He wasn't wearing a seat belt. At last report, he still was hospitalized, and no one knew how many lost workdays he would have.

Elsewhere, an E-1 answered his cell phone after entering the front gate of a naval station, en route to his ship for duty. The subsequent loss of situational awareness caused him to hit a light pole 1,000 yards from the entrance. The young victim suffered only a minor knee injury.

Finally, an E-5 was driving northbound on an interstate highway when she tried to retrieve a cell phone from her pants pocket to answer an incoming call. As if that distraction wasn't enough, she had a BAC of 0.08. She ended up hitting a concrete median and requiring surgery to repair four ruptured cervical disks.

Incidents like these have caused Navy and Marine Corps officials to start changing driving

and a one-point penalty on their driving record for each infringement. The only exceptions are drivers caught using a hand-held phone for making an emergency call, dialing a phone number, or powering the phone on or off.

At Quantico Marine Corps Base, on the other hand, where warnings went into effect in May 2003, but enforcement didn't occur until July 1, 2004, violators are assessed a three-point penalty on their driving records for each infringement. Those who accrue 12 points in a year will find themselves walking or cycling across the 60,000-acre Quantico installation.

And, at Marine Corps Air Station, Iwakuni, Japan, violators receive a warning on the first offense and a three-point ticket for all subsequent violations. Base motorists who accrue 12 points in 12 months or 18 points in 24 months have their license revoked.

Both military and civilian personnel Marine Corpswide already are forbidden by MCO 5100.19E to use hand-held cell phones on base. Most Navy commands, however, won't be affected until the new OpNavInst 5100.12H is issued—at a

# Id Cell Phones

date yet to be determined. [*OpNavInst 5100.12G simply says to exercise caution while operating cellular phones in a moving motor vehicle.*]

Advocates calling for such bans on cell-phone use in cars point to research, like the University of Utah's "inattention blindness" findings to support their case. In 2001, university researchers found that drivers were slower to react and more likely to be involved in an accident when talking on a cell phone. Their research also found that hands-free devices did not significantly reduce the risk factors.

"Inattention blindness" is said to impair a driver's ability to process visual information. The researchers concluded that, even if drivers are looking directly at objects, they might not be able to see them because their attention is directed somewhere else—namely, the phone conversation.

An earlier Japanese study of 50 students reflected obvious findings: They tended to drift into

other lanes while dialing and answering or talking on cell phones. However, the research also revealed some hidden problems.

The students took an average 1.9 seconds to pick up a cell phone, compared to just 1.05 seconds to turn on the radio or to switch stations. Meanwhile, the average braking time of slightly more than one second increased more than 50 percent when the students were holding a car phone. The research also revealed that the drivers tended to do more braking while using a phone.

With the new Navy and Marine Corps rules for using cell phones while driving on base, retailers are likely to have at least a few more customers looking for devices that help them meet the required hands-free operation. What's available?

Small earphones that insert into the ear and that have microphones are growing in popularity. Speakerphones that can dial a number, using only

voice, also are becoming more prevalent. These latter devices mount in a car's interior and can pick up the driver's voice without any need for manual manipulation.

According to the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association, there are 100 million wireless subscribers today, which is more than 36 percent of the U.S. population. Of those subscribers driving passenger cars on America's roadways at any given time, three percent are talking on hand-held cell phones. That's the results of a survey conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. ■



The owner of this car was on his way to work when a young woman in the next lane started moving toward him. He honked his horn, but she just kept coming. It turns out she was late for work, talking on her cell phone, and never heard the horn.

# Naval Safety Center Accomplishments

## 2004 Victories

- ✓ ORM and High Risk Training OPNAV directives released December 04
- ✓ First Flag notification requirements for Class A mishaps
- ✓ *Traffic Safety Across America*—Road show and CD produced/distributed to the Fleet
- ✓ Institutionalized Culture Workshop program at NSC
- ✓ Launched upgraded version of WESS in July 2004 for improved fleet mishap reporting
- ✓ Agreement with Motorcycle Safety Foundation and Specialty Vehicle Institute of America
- ✓ Safety Campaign Plan
- ✓ Established the Navy/Marine Corps Safety Council (held meetings in March and September)

## 2005 Priorities

- ☐ **Operational Risk Management**
  - Complete comprehensive review
  - Develop “cradle to grave” training
  - Implement OPNAVINST 3500.39B Operational Risk Management instruction
- ☐ **Traffic Safety**
  - Complete baseline review
  - Further evaluate simulator use for Driver Improvement (AAA-DIP) and Emergency Vehicle (EVOC) training
- ☐ **WESS**
  - Improve mishap reporting throughout Fleet
  - Aviation HAZREP reporting via WESS online April 2005
  - Aviation mishap reporting via WESS online December 2005
- ☐ **Culture Workshop**
  - Introduce Culture Workshops throughout surface community
  - Increase use of available online safety surveys
  - Establish independent Culture Workshop division at Naval Safety Center

FY05 through 02 Feb 05	USN			USMC		
<b>GREEN</b> indicates less than 34% of goal; <b>YELLOW</b> indicates 34-66% of goal; <b>RED</b> indicates 67% or more of goal.	FY04 Total	FY05 To Date	FY05 Goal	FY04 Total	FY05 To Date	FY05 Goal
Aviation Class A flight mishaps	12	6	10	18	3	7
Shore/ground Class A mishaps (including motor vehicle)	14	5	7	26	11	10
Afloat Class A mishaps	8	2	5	N/A		
PMV fatalities	73	28	37	46	15	32
Off-duty recreational fatalities	22	5	10	11	2	5



# Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day

**T**raffic crashes and deaths have affected the lives of most Americans. Many of us have lost family and friends in the tragedies that occur on our nation's highways—about 40,000 each year. That figure compares to 119 Sailors and Marines who died in private motor-vehicle crashes during fiscal year 2004. We can and must lower such significant losses of life.

Vehicle crashes are an even greater threat to life and health in the United States than crime.

For example, a murder occurs every 34 minutes, compared to one traffic death every 13 minutes. Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death in the United States for people ages 4 to 33, which translates into an economic cost estimated at \$150 billion each year, or 2.2 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product.

We can reduce crashes and save lives on our highways by increasing our nation's focus on reducing driver inattention and drunk driving, increasing the use of seat belts and child-safety restraints, and improving our signs and roads. That's why public-sector and private-sector groups have joined forces for an annual event called "Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day"—celebrated each Oct. 10.

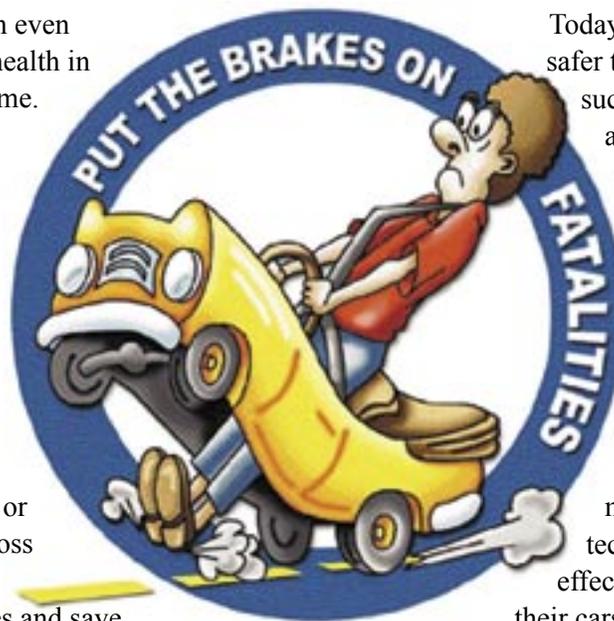
Here are some things we all can do to put the brakes on fatalities:

## **Driver Behavior**

Drunk driving, speeding, and drowsy, aggressive and distracted driving continue to be major problems on our roads and bridges. Motorists

should slow down, drive defensively, and wear all protective gear—like seat belts and motorcycle helmets. Bicyclists and pedestrians need to be alert and careful. In 2003, 619 bicyclists and 4,749 pedestrians died in traffic crashes.

## **Vehicle Design and Maintenance**



Today's passenger vehicles are safer than ever. Advancements such as integrated seat belts, air bags, anti-lock brakes, improved seat design, new crumple-zone technology, and other features mean motorists and passengers are able to walk away from crashes that once claimed lives.

These improvements will continue; however, owners must learn to use the new technologies for them to be effective. Drivers also must keep their cars and trucks maintained to ensure proper performance.

## **Roadway Design and Signage**

Substandard road conditions, obsolete designs, and roadside hazards contribute to more than 15,000 annual highway deaths—nearly a third of all fatal crashes. This number can be reduced with roadway improvements such as wider lanes, stripes and shoulders; better lighting and brighter, highly reflective signs and devices; intersection improvements; median barriers; and rumble strips.

Join family, friends and co-workers this Oct. 10 and help put the brakes on traffic fatalities. "Drive As If Your Life Depends on It"—that's the official slogan for this annual event. ■

# In These Arms...

By Lt. Amy Doll,  
VAW-120

“Home is just a short drive from the bar, and I’ve had only a few drinks.” Drunks often use this and similar excuses as they grab their keys and get behind the wheels of their cars. They aren’t concerned about getting stopped for a DUI, losing their license, or killing themselves. They’re not even concerned about maybe killing someone else.

My younger sister, an EMT, was enjoying a slow afternoon of work. She rides with a local transport service that takes mostly elderly patients to and from routine hospital appointments. She is trained to deal with extreme circumstances, but nothing could have prepared her for what she would see this day.

She was part of an ambulance crew driving to their next appointment when, a few blocks away, a young mother was pushing her 2-year-old son in a stroller down the sidewalk. The woman and her child had stopped at a major intersection to wait for the traffic light to change. As they waited, a car approached, with a driver who had had a few too many drinks. He lost control of his car and hit another one in the intersection—no big deal, right? Wrong!

The other car spun out of control, jumped the curb where the mother was standing with her son, hit the stroller, and sent the child flying into the street. My sister and her fellow EMTs arrived moments later, purely by accident. Realizing what had happened, my sister ran from the stopped ambulance to where the boy had landed. He still was breathing, but his skull was split from ear to ear. My sister wrapped his head with bandages to slow the bleeding. The little boy died in my sister’s arms.

Was grabbing the keys really worth it in this case? Let’s look at the results: a mishap, a child-

less mother still standing on the corner, and a little boy who won’t see his third birthday. How about the 23-year-old EMT who never will be able to erase the images of that child, covered in blood, who died in her arms? Meanwhile, the drunk driver walked away from the accident with no injuries.

*Unfortunately, similar scenes play out again and again. Consider this account from a Kentucky State Police sergeant.—Ed.*

He still was breathing, but his skull was split from ear to ear.

Years ago, when I was an EMT with an ambulance service, I had to hold a 22-year-old girl while the rescue squad cut her from a vehicle. A DUI driver had hit her head-on. She died in my arms, and I always said if I ever became a state trooper, I’d put all DUI drivers I stopped where they belong.

I’m proud to say that during 18 years of service, I’ve arrested about 2,500 DUI drivers. For about 10 of those years, I led the state of Kentucky in DUI arrests. Despite all these experiences with drunk drivers, I still don’t know why they don’t have better sense.

I remember a nighttime DUI incident that occurred Aug. 29, 1992, on the Daniel Boone Parkway in southeastern Kentucky. I was six miles from the accident scene and just had arrested another DUI driver when I answered the call.

The parkway incident involved a DUI driver who was speeding in a 1991 Chevrolet, with two passengers. The subject was traveling eastbound, and, when he came upon other cars, he would turn off his lights and pass them. Everything went OK until he approached a steep curve in the unfamiliar road and tried to get back in his own lane after passing another car. He met a 1979 Cadillac traveling westbound.

The Chevrolet started skidding sideways, and its left side hit the Cadillac. Five people died in this mishap.

When we drink, even “a little too much,” and get behind the wheel of a car, we risk more than our lives and careers. We risk the innocent lives of others. Think before you drink, and always have a designated driver. 

*Thanks to Sgt. Richard Brown of the Lanett, Ala. Police Department for allowing me to use some info from his website at [www.duipictures.com](http://www.duipictures.com) for this article.—Ed.*



# THE GOOD TIMES GUIDE

**1**

**You need a reason for a 2nd mortgage.**

(A typical DUI runs from \$5,000 to \$20,000)

**2**

**You like donating to your defense attorney's holiday fund.**

(Defense attorney fees start at \$1,500)

**3**

**You've got an extra \$5,000 to "give" to your car insurance company.**

(High risk insurance runs up to \$1,000 per month — if you don't get cancelled)

**10**

**Handcuffs are a cool fashion accessory.**

(Handcuffs are required when transporting arrested passengers in patrol cars)

**9**

**You miss going to class.**

(\$375 tuition to attend 10-week class at Va. Alcohol Safety Action Program — ASAP)

**8**

**A mug shot looks better than your drivers license photo.**

(Finger printing & photo are required for every DUI arrest)

**7**

**Being seen riding in the back of a police car is cool.**

(Police officers can arrest without a warrant for DUI)

**6**

**It looks good on a job application.**

(DUI will be revealed during an employer's background check)

**4**

**Jail time is a cheap, unpaid vacation.**

(Jail time could be up to 1 year)

**5**

**You want to take a break from driving.**

(Mandatory 7-day administrative license revocation for 1st DUI)

## Top 10 Reasons To Get A DUI in Virginia



**Always use a designated driver or call a cab.**

Brought to you by the Naval Safety Center and our partner, DRIVE SAFE HAMPTON ROADS.