



Admiral's Corner
From Commander, Naval Safety Center

Why Take Any Unnecessary Risks?

Most Sailors and Marines, including those 18-to-25-year-olds who think they're invincible, wouldn't even consider playing Russian roulette, yet they'll take other equally dangerous chances. For some, it's driving a car 100 mph—perhaps without wearing a seat belt.

For one 23-year-old fleet PO2, it was using a ship's table saw **after** he had removed the blade guard. He was making a trim cut on a 13-inch board when it suddenly twisted and kicked back, pulling his right hand across the saw blade. He immediately grabbed a rag, applied direct pressure to the wound, and reported to the ship's medical department. The diagnosis was a complicated laceration and fracture to the second digit. He had to be taken to a medical center, where an orthopedist surgically pinned his fractured finger.

After missing nearly 30 workdays, the PO2 returned to his ship as it was leaving port and had the ship's surgeon remove the pin. The surgeon immediately admitted him to a ward because of infection, failed antibiotic therapy, and surgical drainage of the wound. A few days later, the PO2 had to be flown to an overseas naval hospital, which subsequently transferred him to a naval medical center stateside.

As various leaders have pointed out, improving safety awareness—and thus preventing senseless mishaps like this—requires a culture change. Expounding on this remark, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. William L. Nyland said, "We have to understand that safety in and of itself is vital not only to the preservation of our wonderful young men and women, but also of the precious

assets that they operate, maintain or take care of. And a culture change is not necessarily easy to come by. Particularly in our case, you have 68 percent of the Marine Corps on any given day on their first enlistment. We want them young; we want the legs young. **But when you tell them they're bulletproof all day, you have to figure out how to tell them they're not bulletproof at night.**"

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Vern Clark likewise has noted that ours is a dangerous profession. "If the commander in chief directs that we go to war, this is not a safe evolution," he said. "Our business is about being able to go into harm's way. **We want every Sailor and every Marine to understand the difference between willingly taking appropriate risks and taking unnecessary risks.**"

From our most junior Sailors and Marines to our most senior officers, a top priority is to keep them from preventable injuries or deaths and to prevent damage to our equipment. Success in our efforts will improve combat readiness, preserve precious resources, and keep families from unwanted sorrow.

Secretary of the Navy Gordon England summed it up best when he observed, "This is the Navy-Marine Corps family. If you really love our people and if you really care about our people, you don't let things happen to them. That's the way we need to look at this every single day."


 RADM Dick Brooks