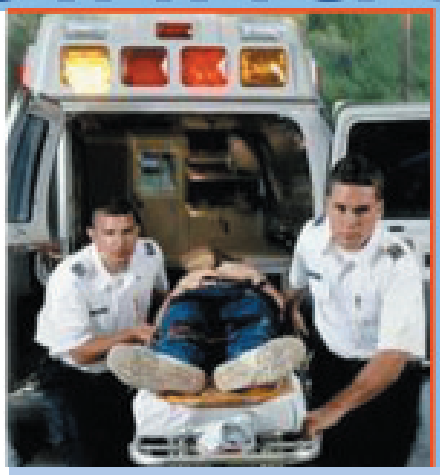
binnacle list



Toledo, Wash.—An inaccurate spotter's report, windy conditions, and uneven terrain combined to sideline a PO3 who was practicing his recreational-skydiving skills. Based on the inaccurate spotter's report about his proximity to the landing zone, he jumped from 10,500 feet. He soon realized he couldn't reach the landing zone and headed for an alternate spot. When he landed on the uneven terrain, he fell and broke his right arm.

A friend witnessed the incident and took the victim to a nearby hospital. He lost 21 workdays.

Currituck, N.C.—Timing is everything. Just ask the left back-seat passenger (a Navy lieutenant), who was ejected from an SUV when it rolled three times after being hit by a car. The lieutenant had removed his seat belt just moments before the accident to get a map from the luggage compartment. He spent only two hours in a hospital with minor injuries but lost two workdays and seven flying days.

Yaquina Bay, Oregon—Whom is the joke really on? That's the question some people are asking at a Coast Guard station.

A seaman hid under a desk, intent on playing a practical joke on a PO2. As the latter sat down at his desk, the seaman slid out the top drawer. Surprised, the PO2 rammed the drawer shut, hitting the seaman in the forehead and opening a one-inch cut just above the left eye.

The victim was treated at a local hospital and returned to duty with no loss of work. Hopefully, he learned his lesson about horseplay.

Key West, Fla.—It was supposed to be a harmless slide into third base for a Coast Guard lieutenant (junior grade), but it proved to be much more. As he slid in feet first during a league softball game, he hit his elbow and dislocated his right shoulder. X-rays at a local emergency room confirmed the problem, which caused the victim to miss several weeks of sea duty.

Aiea, Hawaii—A CPO was traveling westbound on a motorcycle at 30 mph in a 35-mph zone when he tried to turn left onto another road. The motorcycle hit gravel that was in the middle of the road, and while the CPO was slowing down to turn, the front wheel slipped out from under him. He was thrown clear and slid an unknown distance.

Police already were on the scene, monitoring the area for speeding cars, and saw what happened. They blamed hazardous road conditions for the accident.

The CPO suffered only a broken shoulder blade, thanks to the fact he was wearing a jacket, helmet and long pants. He had no cuts or abrasions from sliding along the ground at 30 mph. Doctors at a local hospital treated him overnight and released him the next morning.

Every intersection has an area that's known as "no man's land." It's a place where tires don't travel and where debris gathers. Watch for it, especially when you're riding a motorcycle.—Michael Borkowski, traffic-safety specialist.

Ballston Spa, N.Y.—Even when a snowblower is turned off, it can pose a hazard. That's the lesson an SCPO learned while cleaning his driveway. He was trying to remove a piece of debris from the snowblower when residual engine compression caused the blade to rotate, cutting off the tip of one finger. The SCPO lost three workdays.

San Marcos, Calif.— "A 20-year-old with a death wish" is how you might describe a seaman who rammed the rear of a Buick Regal with his 2000 Honda. Because he wasn't wearing a seat belt, he was ejected from the driver's side window.

According to the seaman, he "was not going over 85 mph" when he tried to change lanes for an approaching exit. He claimed he couldn't avoid hitting the rear of the Buick, which was traveling about 65 mph. The Honda then veered right and went down an embankment.

A state trooper, however, disputed that version of the story in a local newspaper article. The trooper said the seaman was racing against a white Acura at speeds reaching 100 mph when he slammed into the Buick.

The seaman ended up with internal injuries, broken ribs, and a fractured and dislocated hip. He was hospitalized for seven days and will lose another estimated 30 workdays. Partial disability also is possible.

This mishap would not have occurred if the seaman hadn't been speeding. His injuries would have been far less severe if he had worn his seat belt. The primary cause of this mishap was irresponsibility.

Owensboro, Ky.—While playing basketball at a local park, a Coast Guard seaman hyperextended his right ankle. Doctors put an air cast on the injury and told the victim to stay off the foot for two days. He spent two weeks on light duty.

Bangor, Maine— "Look where you're going." Nearly everyone has heard that advice at one time or another. A PO3 learned his lesson the hard way while playing organized roller hockey in a recreation area on base. As he was leaving the rink, he tripped and fell over a portable barrier. A broken arm cost him 14 workdays.

Boston, Mass.—Horseplay always is costly. Just ask the Coast Guard fireman apprentice who was wrestling with a shipmate in the barracks and hit his head on the deck. He was unconscious for two minutes before he went to a nearby medical center for treatment. He lost three workdays.

Calera, Ala.— "I wasn't fatigued or sleepy. I simply was driving along when a tire blew out," a PO2 swore initially. As revealed in the JAG investigation that followed, however, the problem wasn't a blown tire.

According to the testimony of a state trooper, several truck drivers had seen the PO2's car weaving along the highway before it crashed. The victim even told some people at the accident scene that he had fallen asleep and caused the one-car wreck. There was no indication the vehicle had blown a tire.

The PO2 spent four days in a hospital and lost 10 workdays.

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