

- When handling a loaded weapon, the operator needs to ensure the safety devices are engaged. Remember the popular saying, “If you see red, you’re dead.” This statement refers to the red color on most safety mechanisms. A red dot or red switch usually indicates safety locks are off.

- Always keep the weapon pointed in a safe direction. Never point at someone.

- Stay alert while cleaning a weapon. Fatigue plays a big role in any evolution. For example, you never would want to get in your car and drive a long distance without being well rested. The same principle applies to handling weapons.

- Read the instructions, mentally review safety

precautions, and take classes on weapons handling.

- Never take a gun for granted.

“I have done this millions of times before.” “I know what I’m doing.” Statements like these indicate a mishap waiting to happen. Pay attention to detail and take time to review procedures before operating a weapon.

The Navy loses Sailors every year in mishaps that could have been prevented. Whether you use a gun for recreation or on the job, planning is the key to avoiding mishaps. The solution may be as simple as asking for help or using the right safety equipment. Take time to evaluate the precautions and risks of a task before you start it. ❏

## Firepower out of Control

Reports reaching the Naval Safety Center show that the victim in the previous story has plenty of company. Here are the tales of shipmates:

### A Deadly Wake-Up Call

Shortly after an EM2’s roommate had returned from a nightclub, he tried to awaken the EM2 for breakfast by threatening him with a .45-caliber pistol. The EM2 awoke, saw the pistol in his face, pushed it away, and closed his eyes to catch a few more winks. The roommate then pointed the pistol at the EM2’s head, and when the EM2 pushed it away this time, a round fired, killing him.

### A Little Bit of Alcohol...

“...And the gun went boom!” That’s one way to describe what happened to an HM3 (with a BAC of .03 after two beers) who was preparing to clean his 9 mm, double-action pistol. He pulled the slide to the rear position with the clip in place and looked into the chamber to

ensure it was empty. He tried to manually lock the slide in the rear position, but as he turned the weapon sideways to disengage the magazine, the slide went forward and chambered a round. The spring action caused his finger to pull the trigger, and the weapon fired.

### Watch Out for Yourself, Too

After spending a night at a friend’s house, an AN noticed his buddy had gone to work without unloading his .380 automatic pistol. Although he didn’t have any experience with this type of weapon, the AN decided to unload it. He put his left hand over the barrel (out of concern for children in the house) and laid the butt of the pistol on his leg, then pushed back the slide. Unfortunately, the slide didn’t stay back, and a round went through the airman’s left hand.

By design, ordnance is hazardous. Know what you’re doing when you handle it, or be prepared to pay a price—sometimes the ultimate price. ❏