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As a young aviator being new to shipboard life, I quickly learned the importance of having a space properly secured for sea.

We were at the end of a flight-deck-certification period, and I was “lucky” enough (read: I am a JO) to stay behind and walk off the ship, instead of flying off a day early. So there I was, sitting in the ready room, killing time during GQ. This drill scenario seemed like it might be interesting, because the CO was going to increase speed and do max-rudder turns. I thought seeing the boat rock and roll would be entertaining.

I was sitting on the arm of a ready-room chair, talking with a watchstander. Over the 1MC, we heard an announcement that the ship would begin turning. I assumed the chairs, like everything else on the ship, were bolted to the deck. The first three turns were uneventful, and we were entertaining ourselves by watching a bolt, hung from the overhead, swinging back and forth.

On the next rudder shift, the chair I was sitting on started to move. I was in the back row and began sliding forward, pushing each chair ahead of me to the front of the ready room. Unfortunately, this was the same time a shipmate opened a door and walked in. Being an agile fellow, he was able to just barely avoid becoming part of the crashing mass of chairs. When things finally settled down and I had untangled myself from the 15 chairs now piled in the front of the room, we took stock and determined no one was hurt.

We were lucky the only result was a wide-eyed jaygee, a spooked shipmate, a good story, a lesson learned, and some later laughs. We easily could have been injured.

We normally take precautions and apply common sense to doing our jobs. We also must take precautions and apply the same common sense to the things we do when we aren't at work. ☺