

RIDER DOWN

AUGUST 2026

Every Decision Matters

Turning Skill into Safe Riding

By Juan Aguilar

The naval enterprise recorded 36 motorcycle crashes in August, including two fatalities and one previously reported April mishap subsequently upgraded to a fatality. The incidents occurred across the continental United States, Italy and Japan with the highest concentrations reported in California (33%) and Virginia (25%). This data reflects a persistent trend: more than 69% of these crashes involved riders aged 29 and under, particularly those in pay grades E-5 and below, continuing to highlight a critical at-risk demographic requiring continued command emphasis on mentorship, training and command engagement.

August's mishaps continue to reflect recurring and largely preventable risk factors, including multi-vehicle interactions, loss of control during braking and cornering, roadway hazards, fatigue, mechanical problems and rider decision-making. Several incidents

involved relatively new riders or personnel who had not completed the Advanced Rider Course or whose training was long overdue. This reinforces the belief that initial training provides a foundation, while continued practice and follow-on training are essential to maintain rider proficiency.

The severity of the crashes, including fatalities, traumatic injuries, multiple fractures, a collapsed lung, loss of consciousness and extended hospitalizations, demonstrate that routine riding scenarios can rapidly produce life-changing consequences. Continuous skill development, defensive riding, sound decision making, motorcycle readiness and command engagement remain essential to reducing risk.

Mishap Overview

In August, 36 motorcycle-related crashes were reported:

- Fatal crashes: 3 active-duty fatalities

At a Glance

USN

Rider fatalities this report: 2
Rider fatalities for FY 26: 17

USMC

Rider fatalities this report: 1
Rider fatalities for FY 26: 10

Totals this report

Non-fatal crashes: 33
Fatalities: 3

- Collision with moving vehicle: 17 incidents
- Overturn/Rollover: 8 incidents
- Ran off road/Control loss: 3 incidents
- No crash data reported: 2 incidents
- Collision with an animal or object: 3 incidents

Key observations

- **Multi-vehicle interactions:** Riders were struck, rear-ended, forced into evasive maneuvers or involved in collisions with other motorists. One rider was rear-ended while stopped and ejected approximately 20 feet into another lane.
- **Loss of control:** Several riders lost control while negotiating turns or after encountering sand, dirt, oil or other roadway conditions.
- **Mechanical and motorcycle readiness:** One rider was ejected after the motorcycle unexpectedly shut off and the rear wheel locked, resulting in multiple fractures and hospitalization.
- **Fatigue:** One rider reportedly dozed off while operating a motorcycle and struck the rear of an SUV, demonstrating the danger of riding while fatigued.
- **Training and experience:** Several riders had recently completed the Basic Riding Course, while others had not completed advanced training or had gone years between motorcycle training courses.
- **Severe injury trend:** Several crashes resulted in fractures, pneumothorax (collapsed lung), loss of consciousness and hospitalization, demonstrating nonfatal does not mean minor.



Chief Machinist's Mate (Nuclear) Austin Willis, from Alpharetta, Georgia, briefs Sailors assigned to USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) on how to conduct a Tires, Controls, Lights, Oil, Chassis, and Kickstand (TCLOCK) safety inspection prior to a command motorcycle ride, while in port Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton, Washington. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Ryan Freiburghaus)

Contributing factors, key takeaways for safe riding

(Editor's note: By analyzing the mishap reports, we gain a more in-depth look at possible causes behind the crashes, so we identify areas to work on and Get Real, Get Better. The following are key points found and areas to focus on.)

1. Multi-Vehicle Interaction Risks:

Other motorists continued to present a significant threat to riders. August included vehicles entering riders' lanes, running a red light, rear-ending a stopped motorcycle and striking riders during turns. Riders cannot control surrounding drivers, but they can improve their chances by maintaining visibility, situational awareness, preserving space, anticipating mistakes and continually identifying escape routes.

2. Loss of Control and Cornering Errors:

Several riders lost control while turning or negotiating curves. In one incident, braking while attempting to adjust position in a sharp curve caused the wheels to lock and resulted in a high-side crash. Other riders lost traction after encountering sand, dirt or oil, reinforcing the importance of proper entry speed, smooth control inputs and traction management.

3. Training Gaps and Skill Retention:

August again demonstrated that completing the Basic Riders Course (BRC) does not equal mastery. Several riders involved in crashes had recently

completed the BRC, while another had not yet attended the Advanced Riders Course. Conversely, experienced riders with extended gaps since their previous training were also involved in serious crashes, reinforcing that proficiency requires continued practice and periodic training throughout a rider's career.

4. Environmental and Roadway Hazards:

Sand, dirt, oil and changing roadway conditions contributed to several loss-of-control events. These hazards become especially dangerous during braking and cornering, when available traction is already being used. Riders must continually scan the roadway, adjust speed for conditions and avoid abrupt inputs when traction is reduced.

5. Decision-Making and Motorcycle Readiness:

August provided clear examples of why readiness involves more than the motorcycle. One rider reportedly dozed off and rear-ended another vehicle while riding in the early morning. Fatigue, speed selection, following distance, mechanical condition and the decision to ride all influence how a routine trip ends.

This month's motorcycle crashes illustrate safe riding depends on more than completing a course or accumulating years of experience. Other motorists, changing roadway conditions, mechanical problems, fatigue and

routine riding decisions can quickly turn an ordinary ride into a serious or fatal event.

The recurring involvement of newer and experienced riders demonstrates motorcycle proficiency must be continually maintained. Training builds the skill, but decisions determine how that skill is used. Continuous practice, defensive riding, mechanical readiness, sound judgment and engaged leadership remain essential to reducing motorcycle crashes and preserving the lives of Sailors and Marines.

To prevent future "shake your head incidents," we encourage everyone to share the following incidents with their riders and use them as learning opportunities throughout the riding season.

By the numbers

- 18 (50%) crashes involved colliding with a moving vehicle.
- 8 (22%) crashes involved a rollover/overturn.
- 5 (14%) crashes involved running off road.
- 3 (8%) crashes involved colliding with an animal or object
- 6 (6%) crashes had missing data.

By the clock

- Midnight- 3:59 a.m. – 2 (6%)
- 4 a.m.-7:59 a.m. – 12 (33%)
- 8 a.m. - 11:59 a.m. – 3 (8%)
- noon - 3:59 p.m. – 7 (19%)
- 4 p.m. - 7:59 p.m. – 9 (25%)
- 8 p.m. - 11:59 p.m. – 2 (6%)
- No Data – 1 (3%)

By the day

- Weekdays - 23 (64%)
- Weekend – 13 (36%)



Rider Down is a monthly update of motorcycle crashes that occurred throughout the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps. The data in this publication reflects what was reported during the time period covered.

Information contained in the report is based

Rider Down

on preliminary data and is provided for hazard awareness and training purposes only. The Naval Safety Command recommends Motorcycle Safety Representatives use this information for training and mentorship programs and forward to others who may have an interest.



CRASH REPORTS

Motorcycle Crash Legend

NR represents information not reported

Red entries represent

Marine Corps-specific mishaps
(all times local)

Fatal Crashes

Aug. 4, 12:30 p.m., age NR, E-5

Location: Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

Remarks: Rider ran off the roadway and struck a guardrail, sustaining fatal injuries.

Aug. 28 4:39 p.m., 32-year-old E-2

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was involved in a single-vehicle crash after departing the roadway and striking a guardrail. The rider was transported to hospital and later pronounced dead. Witness and preliminary medical examiner reports indicated the rider was wearing proper PPE, with no speeding observed.

The following event was initially reported as an incident in April and has since been upgraded to a fatality.

July 31, 6:22 p.m., 20-year-old E-4

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider succumbed to injuries sustained in an April 2 crash after being placed in a medically induced coma and subsequently undergoing compassionate extubating.

Nonfatal Crashes

Aug. 1, 4:30 a.m., 25-year-old E-5

Location: Jacksonville, North Carolina

Remarks: Rider was ejected after motorcycle unexpectedly shut off and the rear wheel locked while approaching an intersection. The rider sustained multiple fractured bones, a torn ACL, road rash and remained hospitalized for almost a week. The rider completed ARC in May 2026.

Aug. 1, 4:45 p.m., 23-year-old E-5

Location: Virginia Beach, Virginia

Remarks: Rider collided with another motorcycle resulting in minimal damage. The rider completed BRC in October 2022 but had not yet attended ARC.

Aug. 2, 4:14 a.m., age 33-year-old E-6

Location: Yorktown, Virginia

Remarks: Rider collided with the rear of an SUV after dozing off. The rider sustained abrasions and soreness.

Aug. 5, 8:20 a.m., 40-year-old E-8

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider swerved to avoid a truck that entered the rider's

lane, causing the motorcycle to fall and collide with another vehicle. The rider sustained broken ribs, a collapsed lung and other injuries requiring hospitalization. The rider completed the BRC August 2007 and ARC in April 2025.

Aug. 6, 3 p.m., 41-year-old O-4

Location: Norwich, Connecticut

Remarks: Rider lost control while negotiating a sharp left curve, applying the brakes while attempting to adjust position in the curve. This caused the wheels to lock and resulted in a high-side crash. The rider was ejected and received first aid at the scene. The rider completed ARC in March 2018.

Aug. 8, 1 a.m., 22-year-old E-5

Location: Norfolk, Virginia

Remarks: Rider crashed after experiencing handlebar instability and subsequently lost consciousness. The rider was hospitalized overnight for observation and released the following day with follow-up medical referrals. The rider completed BRC in May 2024.

Aug. 9, 7 p.m., 28-year-old E-5

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider sustained multiple fractures requiring hospitalization and continued medical treatment from a crash. The rider remained under medical care while the command continued underway operations. The rider completed BRC in March 2026.

Aug. 10, 6:20 a.m., 32-year-old E-4

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider crashed while commuting to work, sustaining no major injuries. The rider completed BRC in April 2026.

Aug. 11, 4 p.m., 43-year-old E-8

Location: Munford, Tennessee

Remarks: Rider lost control while negotiating a turn and the tires lost traction on sand and dirt. The rider slid into a grassy area; no injuries or lost time were reported. The rider completed motorcycle training in November 2023.

Acronyms

*ACL: anterior cruciate ligament

*ARC: Advanced Rider Course

*BRC: Basic Rider Course

*ERC: Experienced Rider Course

*ICU: intensive care unit

*NR: not reported

*SUV: sport utility vehicle

*PPE: personal protection equipment

*SIQ: sick in quarters

Aug. 14, 4 a.m., 26-year-old E-5

Location: Virginia Beach, Virginia

Remarks: Rider struck a median and was ejected after overcorrecting and striking the median a second time. The rider sustained a fractured vertebra requiring surgery and was hospitalized for three days before being placed on 14 days of convalescent leave. The rider completed the BRC in September 2025.

Aug. 15, 12:05 p.m., 26-year-old E-5

Location: New Orleans, Louisiana

Remarks: Rider was stopped in traffic when a passenger vehicle rear-ended the motorcycle, ejecting the rider approximately 20 feet into an adjacent lane. The impact initiated a chain-reaction collision involving five additional vehicles. The rider completed ERC in February 2026.

Aug. 16, time, age, rank NR

Location: Raleigh, North Carolina

Remarks: Rider was in a crash, lost consciousness and was hospitalized.

Aug. 18, 6:48 a.m., 24-year-old E4

Location: Jacksonville, Florida

Remarks: Rider was involved in a collision with a vehicle while on base, sustaining multiple injuries requiring hospitalization and medical treatment.

Aug. 19, 6:40 a.m., age and rank NR

Location: Oceanside, California

Remarks: Rider lost control while making a left turn through an intersection at approximately 20 mph. The rider sustained minor road rash and received medical treatment at hospital.

Aug. 19, 7:30 a.m., 29-year-old E-5

Location: Fallon, Nevada

Remarks: Rider lost control after the rear tire encountered an oily patch while negotiating a roundabout on base. The rider sustained minor abrasions to the left knee and right elbow. The rider completed the BRC in July 2026.

Aug. 19, 8:20 a.m., 40-year-old E-8

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was struck by a vehicle that ran a red light while traveling through an intersection. The rider sustained non-life-threatening injuries, lost consciousness during the incident and was hospitalized overnight for observation and further evaluation. The rider completed the ERC in April 2024

Aug. 19, 5:30 p.m., 22-year-old E-2

Location: Bangor, Washington

Remarks: Rider was involved in a single-vehicle crash while leaving work, with speed initially identified as a contributing factor. The rider was transported to hospital and stabilized. The rider completed the BRC in June 2026.

Aug. 20, 7:45 a.m., 26-year-old E-5

Location: Norfolk, Virginia

Remarks: Rider collided with the front of a passenger vehicle and was thrown over the hood. The rider sustained injuries to the neck, back and right knee.

Aug. 20, 9 a.m., 21-year-old E-3

Location: Jacksonville, Florida

Remarks: Rider collided with a pickup truck after making an improper lane change while negotiating a left turn. The rider's leg was briefly pinned between the motorcycle and the vehicle before the rider fell onto the roadway. The rider sustained minor scrapes and bruises.

Aug. 20, 2:58 p.m., 25-year-old E-4

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider collided with another vehicle after changing lanes too quickly while merging onto the interstate. The rider sustained minor scrapes and bruises. The rider completed the BRC in January 2026.

Aug. 20, 11 p.m., 23-year-old E-3

Location: Honolulu, Hawaii

Remarks: Rider collided with a vehicle turning left across the rider's path while traveling through an intersection. The rider sustained a fractured hip, multiple vertebral fractures and other bodily injuries and was transported to hospital for treatment.

Aug. 21, 3:15 p.m., 41-year-old E-9

Location: Virginia Beach, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was struck by another vehicle while making a turn. The rider sustained a displaced left rib fracture that punctured and collapsed the lung. The rider was transported to hospital for treatment. Motorcycle training was last completed in 2007.

Aug. 21, 7:30 a.m., 31-year-old O-3

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was commuting to work and was sideswiped by another vehicle that fled the scene. The rider sustained injuries to the forearm and minor wrist fractures requiring medical treatment. The rider was wearing all required PPE and had completed the ARC in April 2023.



ENABLING WARFIGHTING READINESS
375 A Street, Norfolk, VA 23511-4399
navalsafetycommand.navy.mil



Aug. 24, 1 a.m., 22-year-old E-3

Location: Leonardtown, Maryland

Remarks: Rider was rear-ended by a vehicle while stopped at a traffic light. The rider sought medical evaluation at an urgent care facility and was placed on 72 hours SIQ. The rider completed the BRC in June 2026.

Aug. 24, 4 p.m., 22-year-old E-3

Location: Piney Green, North Carolina

Remarks: Rider was struck from behind by a vehicle after braking for traffic that stopped abruptly ahead. The rider sustained a laceration to the left hand requiring stitches.

Aug. 24, 4:45 p.m., 23-year-old E-5

Location: Gaeta, Italy

Remarks: Rider was struck by a vehicle, causing the motorcycle to collide with a parked vehicle and eject the rider. The rider sustained a pelvic fracture with internal bleeding and was transported for emergency medical treatment. The rider completed the ERC in May 2024.

Aug. 25, 7:28 a.m., age NR E-5

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider collided with a sedan while commuting to work. The rider was transported to hospital and initially admitted to the ICU before being transferred to a progressive care unit for continued treatment. The rider completed the BRC, possessed motorcycle endorsement and was wearing all required PPE.

Aug. 25, 1:20 p.m., 21-year-old E-3

Location: Alexandria, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was in a crash while commuting to work. The rider sustained road rash and a fractured left thumb and was transported to hospital for medical evaluation. The rider had completed the required motorcycle safety course and was wearing proper PPE.

Aug. 26, 6:58 a.m., 46-year-old E-6

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider lost control after moving onto the shoulder to avoid a vehicle that changed lanes directly ahead. The motorcycle struck a bump or curb and slid, causing the rider to crash. The rider completed the ARC in November 2023.

Aug. 26, 4:30 p.m., age NR E-6

Location: Virginia Beach, Virginia

Remarks: Rider lost control while repositioning the motorcycle in a residential driveway. The throttle was inadvertently engaged, causing the motorcycle to accelerate into the garage wall. The rider sustained minor bruising and abrasions and was evaluated at an emergency room.

Aug. 27, 3 p.m., age NR E-5

Location: Yokosuka, Japan

Remarks: Rider laid the motorcycle down while riding and sustained a fracture and abrasions. The rider completed the BRC in July 2026.

Aug. 28, 9 p.m., 24-year-old E-3

Location: Goshen, California

Remarks: Rider lost control while attempting to avoid an object in the roadway. The rider was ejected after leaving the roadway, sustaining minor injuries.

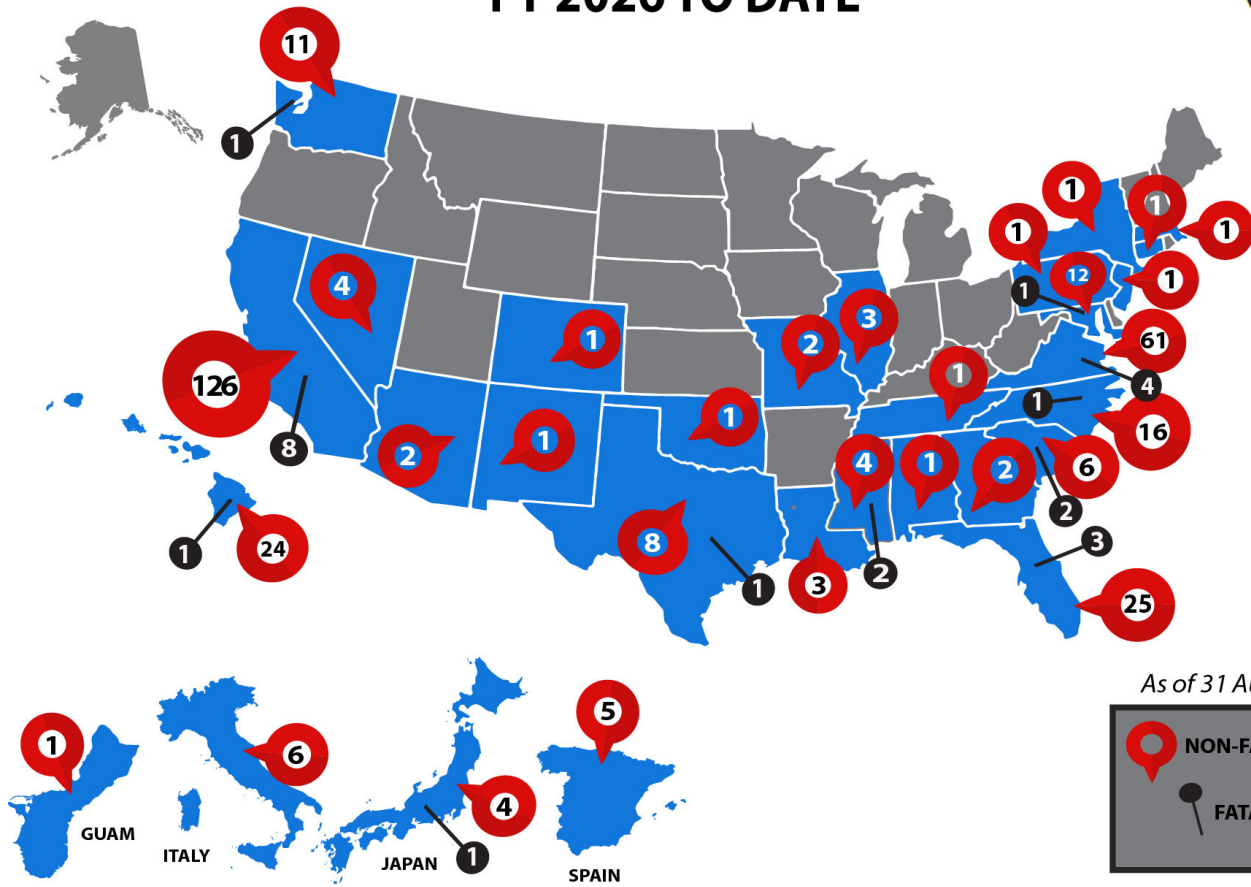
Aug. 31, 6 a.m., 26-year-old E-4

Location: Newport News, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was struck by a vehicle, sustaining minor injuries and was transported to hospital in stable condition. The rider had not completed BRC.



USN AND USMC MOTORCYCLE CRASHES FY 2026 TO DATE



As of 31 August 2026