

Summer 2026

# GROUND WARRIOR

THE MARINE CORPS GROUND AND NAVAL EXPEDITIONARY WARFARE SAFETY MAGAZINE

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**TRAIN SMARTER, FIGHT HARDER** PAGE 26

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Looking for  
authors!

Can you spot  
the K-BAR ?



# A Letter from the Marine Gunner Risk Management Directorate



Marines, Sailors, Civilian Teammates, Families and Friends,

I am honored and privileged to be the first in this new billet as the Marine Gunner for Risk Management Directorate. I look forward to visiting your areas of responsibility out in the Fleet Marine Force and observing your well-constructed fighting position.

My entire career as an infantry weapons officer has been about managing risk at the most fundamental level, where steel meets target and training meets reality. My perspective wasn't forged in a classroom, but through multiple combat tours, expeditionary deployments, many hours spent planning and executing complex live fire events.

I view risk management not as a bureaucratic function, but as a tactical imperative. It is a fundamental bedrock of lethality and readiness. A weapon system that isn't properly maintained, a range that isn't correctly managed or a Marine who isn't adequately trained all represent a failure to manage risk that has direct consequences on our warfighting ability and lethality of our force in readiness.

Therefore, I challenge our community to measure our success with one question: Does our guidance make a Marine unit more capable of accomplishing its mission?

To achieve this, we must be the credible, trusted experts commanders seek out, not the office they avoid. This credibility is earned through what I call the "Three M's":

**Mastery-** Know your craft inside and out. Be the undisputed expert on safety regulations, operational procedures and the equipment our Marines use. Your knowledge must be so deep your advice is mission essential.

**Mentorship-** We are all teachers. Your job is to mentor leaders at every level, from the fire team leader to the battalion commander, on how to think critically about risk. Turn every interaction into an opportunity to make them better risk managers.

**Mindset-** Approach every situation with a warfighting mindset. We are here to enable mission accomplishment by helping commanders make calculated, intelligent risk decisions—not to hinder them with a zero-defect mentality.

Semper Fidelis!

Harry Taylor  
Chief Warrant Officer 5, United States Marine Corps  
Marine Gunner, Risk Management Directorate

## THE GROUND WARRIOR TEAM WANTS YOUR STORY!

Risk Management Directorate–Safety Division is seeking articles for upcoming issues of the Ground Warrior Magazine, the premier magazine for Marine Corps safety.

The strength of the Marine Corps lies in the quality and character of those who lead and step up to share their experiences to improve the Marine Corps.

As Marines, you have seen all types of risk—good and bad—up close and personal. Use that experience to help improve the organization.

### SUBMISSION TOPICS MAY COVER:

- Institutional risk and managing organizational vulnerabilities
- Identifying hidden risks in rapidly changing operational environments
- Sharing lessons learned from personal experience on risk mitigation
- Fostering critical thinkers who identify and act early, staying left of bang

### WHO CAN SUBMIT:

All active duty, Reserve, veteran Marines and civilians. Officers from other countries are also welcome to submit articles.

### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

- Length: 500–1,200 words
- Submit in a .docx file; provide citations as needed
- Include your full name, rank and mailing address in the body of the email
- Use DVIDS if you have specific photos you would like to include <https://www.dvidshub.net/>

**Have questions?  
Or an article ready for submission?**

Email [Ground\\_Warrior\\_Magazine@usmc.mil](mailto:Ground_Warrior_Magazine@usmc.mil)

THE GROUND WARRIOR TEAM IS  
LISTENING!  
WE WANT EVERY OPINION!

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We need input from you, the ground warrior in the field, about the content we provide.

Scan the QR code to submit your feedback.



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Special thanks to USMC Range and Training Area Management, Chaplain of the Marine Corps Office and Marine Corps Community Services for their continued support.

Front cover: U.S. Marines with Baker Company, Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, fire at targets during a live-fire shoot aboard amphibious transport dock USS San Diego (LPD 22), in the Timor Sea, June 12, 2025. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Trevor BishopWilliams)

Back cover: U.S. Marines with Medium-Range Missile Battery, 3d Littoral Combat Team, 3d Marine Littoral Regiment, 3d Marine Division prepare to load a Navy-Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System onto a U.S. Air Force C-130J Super Hercules assigned to 39th Airlift Squadron during Exercise Balikatan 25 at Lal-lo, Philippines, April 26, 2025. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Chief Warrant Officer 2 Trent Randolph)

Ground Warrior Magazine is a forum where Marines, Sailors and civilians can share safety-related experiences, thereby providing valuable lessons learned to others. Input from the fleet is crucial to improving safety culture, conducting safe operations and thus maintaining readiness. Ground Warrior is published jointly between the Risk Management Directorate, Safety Division and the Naval Safety Command. Content within Ground Warrior does not necessarily represent the official views of, nor is it endorsed by, the U.S. government, Department of War, U.S. Navy or U.S. Marine Corps. Photos and artwork may be representative and not necessarily show the people or equipment discussed. The Ground Warrior editorial staff reserves the right to edit articles for readability. Reference to commercial products does not imply endorsement. Unless otherwise stated, content may be reprinted without permission by giving proper credit to the magazine, author and photographer when applicable.

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# Ground Truth

## THE FUJI FIRE CATASTROPHE OF 1979

### A CHRONOLOGICAL HUMAN FACTORS ANALYSIS

Shawn Curtis, Safety and Occupational Health Manager and Maj. Kevin Stephensen, Risk Management Directorate-Safety Division

Private First Class T.C. Elem was just 19 when fire tore through Camp Fuji, Japan, killing him. He didn't fall in combat, but he died with the heart of a warrior, risking everything to help his fellow Marines reach safety. His story, along with those of the 12 others who died, should inspire every Marine not only to remember but to lead with greater purpose.

*"It's been many years now and there's not too many days that go by I don't think about the destruction," said retired Sgt. Maj. Michael Tuttle, a survivor of this tragedy.*

On Oct. 19, 1979, a devastating fire at Camp Fuji resulted in the death of 13 Marines from Battalion Landing Team, Second Battalion, Fourth Marine Regiment (BLT 2/4) and injured 60 others, including three Japanese civilians and one U.S. Navy Sailor, during Super Typhoon Tip.

Described by then-Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Robert H. Barrow as the Marine Corps' worst peacetime disaster, this tragedy stemmed from systemic failures across multiple levels.

The disaster was not simply an unfortunate consequence of a typhoon; it was the result of cascading failures across multiple levels of leadership and planning. This wasn't just about safety; it was about leadership, accountability and combat effectiveness.

#### The Catastrophe:

By 1:40 p.m., Oct. 19, Typhoon Tip had reached its closest point to Camp Fuji. Torrential rainfall overwhelmed the expeditionary fuel farm and the immense weight of accumulated water exerted pressure on the earthen berms beyond their capacity.

A breach, approximately 15 to 20 feet wide, opened in the long berm designed to divert runoff away from the Quonset huts. Two trailer-mounted pumps, each weighing



Photo of Quonset huts as occupied by BLT 2/4 days before the fire. Photo credit by Gunnery Sgt. David Luttenberger, USMC (Ret.)

3,200 pounds, positioned atop the berm, were swept into the breach, still tethered to their fuel bladders.

One bladder, containing 5,933 gallons of 86-octane gasoline, was lifted by the surging floodwaters over the berm, eventually catching in the frame of one of the fallen trailers, resulting in a five-foot tear along the bladder's horizontal seam.

With no fuel farm sentry on duty to witness the tear and sound the alarm, thousands of gallons of fuel surged downhill atop the rainwater, flowing toward the area housing BLT 2/4.

The mixture swept across the ground between Quonset huts, seeping under doors and spreading across the floors of structures sheltering Marines and Sailors.

In hut D-215, a mixture of gasoline and rainwater pooled across the floor. As fuel vapors rose and combined with oxygen, they reached a height where they likely ignited upon contact with the open flame of a kerosene heater, as was standard at the time for heating expeditionary facilities, triggering an explosion.

The resulting blaze, fueled by countless airborne gasoline droplets, rapidly swept through the encampment consuming multiple structures within moments.

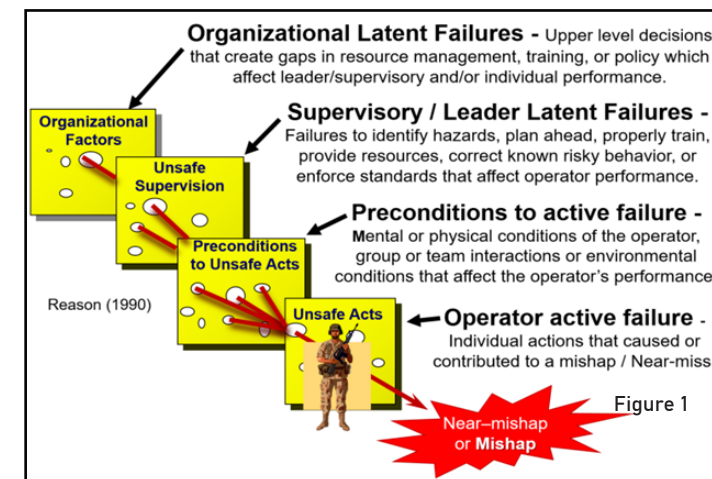
As Marines and Sailors attempted to escape into the fury of the typhoon, their efforts were obstructed because the doors were roped or boarded to keep the super typhoons weather out, serving as unintended barriers to evacuation.

The first casualty was 21-year-old Lance Cpl. L.C. Malveaux of Beaumont, Texas. Many others sustained devastating second- and third-degree burns, leaving their bodies scorched by the inferno. In the following weeks, 12 more Marines, ranging in age from 17 to 22, succumbed to infections stemming from their injuries. Of the 73 people wounded in the incident, 54 suffered severe thermal trauma.

The Camp Fuji fire was not merely a consequence of nature's fury, but a preventable catastrophe borne by systemic oversights, misjudgments and a failure to heed warnings. The fire stands as a sobering reminder of the imperative for vigilance, accountability and adherence to safety protocols, especially in environments where lives depend on the integrity of planning and execution.

In honoring the memory of those lost and injured, we must also commit to learning from the past, ensuring such a tragedy is never repeated. The following is a timeline of the small changes and decisions made along the way leading to this tragedy. To better understand this tragedy the events will be analyzed using the Human Factors Analysis and Classification System (HFACS) 8.0.

HFACS events are organized chronologically within HFACS's four levels to identify root causes and draw lessons for today's Marine leaders: organizational influences, supervisory factors, preconditions to unsafe acts (active or latent) and unsafe acts. Reference figure 1 throughout the article. HFACS were not as well understood at the time of the event as they are today by safety professionals.



#### 1. Organizational Influences: The Quiet Risk Builders

Systemic policies, resource allocation and cultural factors, often normalized over time, set the stage for the Fuji Fire.

July 2: The Logistics Support Unit (LSU) positioned fuel



BLT 2/4 burn victims medevacked on a C-141 Starlifter Oct. 22 1979 from Yokota Air Base, Japan to Brooke Army Medical Center, San Antonio, Texas. U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Curt Eddings.

bladders several hundred feet uphill from Quonset huts housing BLT 2/4. This marked a departure from the previous three years, during which fuel had been stockpiled in a more remote, sparsely occupied area of the camp. The officer in charge, a career artillery officer with only a six-month logistics assignment a decade prior, lacked formal training before assuming the position. The logistics MOS for officers did not exist in the Marine Corps yet and the billet was often a collateral duty.

- **Latent Failure: Training Program Issues.** Organizational policies prematurely conferred logistics qualifications without ensuring adequate training or experience, reflecting normalized risk acceptance in assuming officers could adapt without specialized preparation.
- **Reflection:** What roles are Marine leaders today assigning without rigorous training, potentially overlooking hidden risks due to normalized assumptions about adaptability?

July: Marine Corps Technical Manual (TM) 3835-15/1 recommended fuel farms be situated on level ground with adequate drainage to prevent water damage to storage containers. The manual also advised isolating fuel farms from living quarters and that the fuel should be at least 250 feet from buildings or structures. Notably, landscape incline was not identified as a factor in determining fuel storage site selection.

- **Latent Failure: Policy, Procedures, Process Issues.** Inadequate guidance in TM 3835-15/1 failed to address topographical risks, a hidden gap accepted as standard practice. In contrast, a 1978 Army field manual explicitly advised against placing fuel storage sites uphill or upstream from other installations, due to the risk of fuel escaping and endangering nearby areas.
- **Reflection:** What outdated or incomplete guidance in current Marine Corps manuals might leaders be following, unaware of risks exposed by emerging environmental, logistical or technological changes?

July 3-12: Combat engineers and bulk fuel specialists leveled the ground and constructed berms around each

Continued on next page



A Quonset hut, similar to the huts that used to serve as office and barracks aboard Camp Fuji, is opened for visitors to see, during the 1979 Camp Fuji Fire memorial ceremony, October 18, 2024. Several were destroyed during the fire. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Song Jordan)

fuel bladder. These berms were engineered to contain one and a half times the volume of the bladder's contents in the event of a spill. Construction occurred uphill from the main earthen berm, with reinforced soil added to extend and stabilize the mound.

Although the berms met design specifications, Camp Fuji's erosion-prone volcanic soil required thorough compaction using vibration energy from heavy equipment rolled over successive layers.

Pressed by a tight deadline to complete camp setup and in the absence of proper soil-compacting equipment, the Marines resorted to an improvised and untested method, using a bulldozer to traverse and compress the soil.

- **Latent Failure: Resource Support Problems.** Insufficient resources and planning, normalized by a culture prioritizing mission completion, left the LSU ill-equipped, compounded by a limited understanding of local soil conditions.
- **Reflection:** What resource shortages or improvised practices are Marine units normalizing today that may work in one environment, but might not work in another environment - hiding unforeseen risks?

**August:** During a two-day fire inspection of Camp Fuji in August 1979, Marine Corps Base (MCB) Camp Butler's fire chief and fire inspector concluded the camp lacked adequate firefighting infrastructure. The inspector observed only two standard fire hydrants. While dry chemical fire extinguishers were present in the base camp where permanent personnel lived and worked, BLT 2/4's training camp had none.

Instead, inspectors found water barrels intended to support improvised bucket brigades, a normal practice at the time. However, without the recommended anti-freeze additives, these barrels posed a risk of freezing during the winter months, rendering them ineffective in cold conditions.

- **Latent Failure: Climate/Cultural Influences.** Normalizing minimal infrastructure as "expeditionary" led to misaligned priorities, diverting resources from critical safety needs.
- **Reflection:** What safety measures are today's Marine leaders deprioritizing as "expeditionary necessities," potentially blind to risks from new operational technologies or environments?

**Why this matters to leaders:** Normalized deviance in organizational practices embeds risks that go unnoticed until disaster strikes. Leaders must challenge long-standing assumptions to ensure safety and effectiveness.

## 2. Supervisory Factors: Where Oversight Broke Down

Supervisory decisions, often influenced by normalized deviance and culture, failed to correct hazardous conditions.

**July 3–12:** The tight deadlines and lack of equipment led the supervisor to accept improvised berm construction despite inadequate equipment.

- **Latent Failure: Ineffective Supervision/ Planning and Coordination.** Supervisory pressure to meet deadlines, normalized as operational necessity, overlooked the need for proper resources, compromising safety.
- **Reflection:** What supervisory shortcuts or deadline-driven decisions are Marine leaders normalizing today, potentially unaware of risks introduced by new systems or experimental technologies?

**August:** The fire inspection cited Camp Fuji for lacking fire safety training and an alert system, relying on informal agreements with nearby Japanese forces.

The installation commanding general did not advocate for immediate corrective measures.

- **Latent Failure: Ineffective Unit Safety Culture.** A deficient safety culture, normalized by prioritizing operational tempo over force protection, neglected training and infrastructure critical for emergencies.
- **Reflection:** In a fiscally restrained time, what decisions are being made today that might have unintended consequences in the future?



Photo of the breached berm. Courtesy of Stars and Stripes.

**Why this matters to leaders:** Supervisors are the frontline of prevention. Normalizing risky practices because they haven't yet caused harm allows vulnerabilities to persist until crisis occurs.

## 3. Preconditions for Unsafe Acts: The Setup for Failure

Environmental and human factors created conditions making unsafe acts more likely.

**Mid-August and Late September:** Severe weather during typhoon season eroded fuel farm berms requiring repairs, but the LSU's did not reassess the site's suitability. The fuel farm could have also been moved at this time.

- **Latent Failure: Physical Environment.** Prior experience a decade earlier during dry conditions led to underestimating weather-related risks, forgoing a necessary risk analysis.
- **Reflection:** How can leaders learn about the local environment conditions so they can make informed decisions?

**Oct. 19, 6:29 a.m. –12:15 p.m.:** As Super Typhoon Tip approached, weather updates escalated from Tropical Cyclone Condition of Readiness-2 (TCCOR) to TCCOR-1 Emergency. Most Marines, familiar with Okinawa's "typhoonized" infrastructure, underestimated the threat, and communication breakdowns delayed updates.

- **Latent Failure: Technological Environment.** Inconsistent forecasting technology and prior experiences shaped a complacent perception, hindering preparedness.
- **Reflection:** What risks based on past experiences are today's Marines ignoring?

**Oct. 19, 12:15–12:45 p.m.:** A 30-minute delay in relaying TCCOR-1 Emergency status, combined with ineffective supervision, led some Marines to ignore sandbagging orders, worsening flooding.

- **Latent Failure: Team Coordination/Communication.** Poor team communication and lax enforcement fostered a laid-back attitude toward storm preparations.
- **Reflection:** What communication breakdowns or lax enforcement in today's units might leaders be blind to?

**Why this matters to leaders:** Environmental and human factors, like complacency, erode decision-making. Leaders must anticipate and counteract these influences.

## 4. Unsafe Acts: The Final Link in the Chain

Immediate errors, enabled by prior failures, triggered the catastrophe.

**Oct. 19, Morning:** Marines secured Quonset hut doors with plywood, padlocks or improvised materials the doors secured to keep the extreme super typhoon out, unintentionally obstructing egress during the fire.

- **Active Failure: Known Deviation.** Hasty storm mitigation efforts created life-threatening barriers.
- **Reflection:** At the individual Marine level or as a leader, have you witnessed a seemingly small deviation being made that might have seemed reasonable at the time due to circumstances, but otherwise wouldn't have been allowed.

**Oct. 19, 1:40 p.m.:** The Firewatch sentry at the fuel farm was removed from watch to protect them from flying projectiles. This was a known deviation from standard practice, however, the pressure of the physical environment impacted leader's decision making. With hindsight, it is possible to speculate that since severe weather was a known environmental factor, what engineering solutions could the command have implemented to still allow a fire watch sentry to remain during severe weather? The removal of the Firewatch sentry resulted in no one being able to sound the alarm when Super Typhoon Tip's rainfall overwhelmed the fuel farm, breaching berms and sweeping a gasoline bladder downhill. The fuel, mixed with floodwater, entered Quonset huts and ignited, triggering a firestorm. Secured doors trapped personnel, leading to 13 deaths and 60 injuries, with 54 suffering severe burns.

- **Active Failure: Judgment and Decision-Making.** The fuel farm sentry was removed from guard duties, without any thought of an engineering solution to allow



19-year-old Marine Pfc. Tyrone Chris Elem was the second Marine to lose his life from the fire's aftermath. He is laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery. Photo courtesy of the Arlington National Cemetery Public Affairs Office.

- a Marine to remain on watch and safe, eliminating the possibility of early hazard detection and delaying notification to personnel.
- **Reflection:** Have you been in a position where you knew the Marine Corps standard, but external pressures influenced your decision making to deviate from the standard?

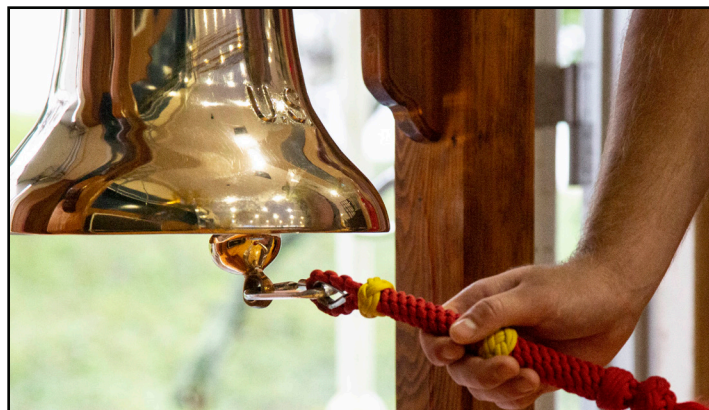
**Why this matters to leaders:** Unsafe acts are the final link, but prevention begins earlier. Developing a better understanding of HFACS enables leaders to address systemic issues before a disaster.

### Conclusion

This disaster was not just a mishap caused by a typhoon; it was the result of cascading failures across multiple levels of leadership and planning.

**For retired Sgt. Maj. Michael Tuttle, who survived the tragedy as a young private first class, the fire was a defining lesson in the weight of every choice. "A series of small, seemingly minor decisions can align to create a catastrophe," Tuttle reflected. "So every decision deserves careful consideration."**

The Fuji fire revealed how normalization of deviance, accepting shortcuts or outdated guidance, can create lethal conditions in expeditionary environments.



U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Robert Estep, an electronics maintenance technician with Combined Arms Training Center (CATC) Camp Fuji, rings the bell for "roll call" during the Fuji Fire Memorial at Big Guns Gym on CATC Camp Fuji, Gotemba, Japan, Oct. 18, 2019. The ceremony is held annually on CATC Camp Fuji to remember the tragic fire that happened Oct. 19, 1979. It took the lives of 13 Marines with Battalion Landing Team, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, and injured others including Japanese rescue workers.. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Sarah Stegall)

This is about Marine Corps values: Honor (for the fallen), Courage (to admit and fix failures), Commitment (to never repeat them).

**Acknowledgment:** Sincere gratitude to retired Marine Capt. Chas Henry, author of "Fuji Fire", for his invaluable contribution to this article by sharing the findings of his comprehensive four-year investigation into the Fuji Fire, including interviews with 130 individuals.



A monument sits outside of the command post at Combined Arms Training Center Camp Fuji, Japan, Oct. 19, 2018. The monument was placed to remember the October 1979 tragic fire. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Timothy Turner)

IN MEMORY OF  
THE  
MARINES AND SAILORS  
OF  
BLT 2/4  
WHO DIED OR WERE INJURED  
DURING THE TYPHOON AND FIRE  
19 OCTOBER 1979

# THE CRUCIBLE OF RECOVERY

## STILL IN THE FIGHT

Capt. Alyssa J. Locksmith, USMC, Wounded Warrior Regiment

**A** split second. A sigh of relief. That's the near miss. On the other end of the spectrum is the final salute for a fallen Marine. Between that sigh of relief and the final salute lies a third outcome often overlooked: the life-changing injury. For the Marine now facing a new battle with a wound or illness, we must ask: Is there a place in our Corps where the Marine becomes the mission?

### Still in the Fight

Whether on the battlefield, during rigorous training or even while off-duty, the potential for a career-altering mishap is a stark reality for every Marine. In these challenging moments, the Wounded Warrior Regiment (WWR) embodies the Marine Corps' enduring commitment to No Marine Left Behind.

As the only Marine Corps command dedicated solely to the recovery and support of wounded, ill, and injured (WII) service members, the WWR delivers comprehensive, coordinated care to Marines and Sailors assigned to Marine Corps units, as well as their families.

The WWR guides them through the demanding process of healing and rehabilitation, enabling a return to a life of purpose—whether in continued service or through successful transition. The WWR does not replace the parent command; rather, it operates in partnership with commanders.

Per Commandant's intent, WII Marines remain with their units for as long as commanders can support their recovery. When recovery becomes complex or long-term, the WWR provides specialized care coordination and advocacy most operational units are not structured to deliver.

This care model is built on the belief keeping Marines with their units, surrounded by their fellow Marines, best supports recovery and a return to duty.

A commander must balance unit readiness with the profound duty to care for their Marines. This leads to the challenging decision of whether a Marine's injury or illness can be managed within the unit or if it necessitates a transfer to a higher level of care.

Choosing the WWR is a deliberate act of leadership, ensuring the Marine is positioned for the best possible recovery, thereby reinforcing the strength and integrity of the entire Corps.



U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Travis Reyes, an athlete for Team Marine Corps, shoots his arrow at the archery event for the 2025 Department of Defense Warrior Games at Washburn Field in Colorado Springs, Colorado, July 24, 2025. (U.S. Army Reserve photo by Sgt. Cherish Little)

### Path to a New Mission

When a Marine is referred to the WWR, they begin a new phase in their journey toward recovery and sustained purpose. While recovery is a process of restoration and growth, learning of a potential assignment to a command dedicated to WII service members can be difficult for a Marine to absorb. That initial realization often carries uncertainty; WWR exists to replace that uncertainty with clarity, structure and opportunity.

The WWR's two battalions, Wounded Warrior Battalion-East at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and Wounded Warrior Battalion-West at Camp Pendleton, California, along with multiple detachments worldwide, provide a network of support standing shoulder-to-shoulder with our warriors, regardless of their location. Through structured engagement, coordinated medical and non-medical support, and deliberate leadership involvement, the recovery process enables Marines to focus on healing and preparing for their next chapter. Whether returning to duty or transitioning from active service, WWR ensures every Marine remains connected to purpose, dignity and Marine Corps values.

### The Competitive Crucible

Recovery becomes the new normal for WII service members. While the process may present challenges for Marines and their families, recovery ultimately represents a deliberate return to health, resilience and strength of mind and body.

Continued on next page

A crucial component of the WWR's "body" pillar is the Warrior Athlete Reconditioning Program (WAR-P), which uses adaptive sports to help Marines focus on their abilities, not their disabilities.

This program is more than just physical training; it's a powerful tool for rebuilding confidence, camaraderie and a sense of purpose to help propel a Marine's recovery. Through WAR-P, Marines and Sailors assigned to Marine Corps units are introduced to a wide range of adaptive sports, including wheelchair rugby, sitting volleyball and archery.

The Marine Corps Trials is an annual, multi-sport adaptive athletic event serving as the Department of War (DoW) Warrior Games selection process. More than competition, the trials mark a significant milestone in a Marine's recovery journey. For some, the event represents the culmination of months—or even years—of dedicated rehabilitation. For others, it provides an opportunity to discover new passions and build connections with fellow warriors who understand their challenges and achievements. This competition fosters strong camaraderie and a shared sense of purpose, creating an environment recognizing and celebrating every athlete's resilience and determination.

The DoW Warrior Games allow top athletes from the Marine Corps Trials to earn the honor of representing the Marine Corps. This annual event showcases the incredible resilience of WII service members from all branches of the U.S. military, including some of our partner nations' international athletes. In wheelchair basketball, the court is alive with the squeal of tires and the clash of chairs as athletes maneuver with incredible skill and precision. In swimming, the water becomes a great equalizer, allowing athletes with a wide range of injuries to compete on a level playing field. In archery and shooting, the focus is on precision and mental discipline, showcasing the



U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Marissa Mares, a California native and distribution specialist with Wounded Warrior Regiment, swims during a competition for the Department of War Warrior Games in Colorado Springs, Colorado, July 26, 2025. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Anthony C. Ramsey Jr.)



U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Stephanie Klicker, a Missouri native and aviation communication systems technician with Wounded Warrior Regiment, marks the impact during an archery competition for the Department of War Warrior Games in Colorado Springs, Colorado, July 25, 2025. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Anthony C. Ramsey Jr.)

unwavering concentration of these warriors. The DoW Warrior Games are a celebration of the human spirit's ability to overcome adversity through the crucible of recovery.

#### Beyond the Games

The journey to the Warrior Games is a testament to the indomitable will of these Marines. It begins with the initial shock and pain of injury or illness, followed by the long and often arduous recovery process.

Within the WWR, each Marine is assigned a recovery team, including a recovery care coordinator who helps them develop a Comprehensive Recovery Plan. Their stories of courage, perseverance and unwavering determination are an inspiration to all.

The games are a powerful reminder that even in the face of life-altering injuries, the warrior spirit remains unbroken.

The thrill of competition at the Marine Corps Trials and Warrior Games marks a significant milestone, but the journey for a Marine in the WWR extends far beyond the finish line. The ultimate goal is to empower each warrior for the next chapter of their lives, whether that involves a return to active duty or a successful transition into the civilian world.

For those preparing to hang up their uniform, the regiment provides a robust support system, including a dedicated Job Transition Cell offering invaluable resources for employment, vocational training and educational pursuits. This commitment, however, doesn't end upon separation.

Embodying the enduring warrior spirit, the WWR's support continues indefinitely for its veterans, ensuring they have access to resources and a network of fellow Marines for life.

#### A Testament to Semper Fidelis

For any commander, the decision to transfer a Marine to the WWR is a profound leadership challenge, requiring a delicate balance between the relentless demands of unit readiness and the sacred obligation to care for an individual Marine. It is crucial for leaders to understand for the service member, this assignment is a vital lifeline. For a Marine reeling from a life-altering event, it means their personal recovery becomes the primary mission, placing them in a secure environment shielded from overwhelming administrative burdens so they can focus purely on healing, a level of dedicated support an operational unit is not designed to provide.

Ultimately, the Wounded Warrior Regiment stands as a powerful testament to the Marine Corps' most sacred promise. From its foundational mission to provide holistic care to the transformative journey it fosters through adaptive sports, the regiment is the living, breathing



U.S. Marines with Wounded Warrior Regiment and coaches gather for a picture during the Department of War Warrior Games in Colorado Springs, Colorado, July 24, 2025. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Anthony C. Ramsey Jr.)

embodiment of "Semper Fidelis." This system provides a crucial mantle of safety in the chaotic aftermath of a combat wound, a training accident or a sudden illness, reassuring not only the individual Marine but the entire Corps. It allows leaders to maintain operational focus, confident their Marines are receiving the best possible care and being assisted through every step of the recovery process.

For the individual Marine, the journey is one of self-discovery and a testament to their resilience, proving beyond a shadow of a doubt they are, and always will be,

#### "Still in the Fight."

##### Wounded Warrior Web Page



Considering referring a Marine? Learn more about the process here.

##### Wounded Warrior IDES Toolkit



Need information on a medical review board or transitioning out of service due to medical reasons? Check out the link for more information.

## SAFETY SPOTLIGHTS



**June A. Whitlock**  
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Marine Corps Air Station Miramar,  
San Diego, California

As a safety and occupational health specialist at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar since January 2017, June Whitlock has been a pivotal force in enhancing mission readiness and cultivating a robust safety culture. Her direct leadership has led to a significant reduction in mishaps, particularly within Marine Corps Community Services, where she transformed incident data into effective, life-saving prevention strategies.

Through her meticulous oversight, which includes conducting more than 300 facility and program inspections, she ensured a comprehensive safety program is deeply integrated across the air station, fundamentally elevating the standards of occupational health for all personnel.

Her innovative approach is further exemplified by her modernization of critical safety programs. She championed ergonomic awareness by holding quarterly meetings to address workplace issues and promote best practices, fostering a healthier work environment.

Most notably, as the respiratory protection program manager, she revolutionized safety and efficiency for 180 personnel by migrating all fit-testing documentation to a centralized SharePoint site. This forward-thinking solution provides immediate access and review capabilities, streamlining administrative processes and ensuring the highest standards of respiratory safety are seamlessly maintained.

# Measuring Inner Strength



## THE EMERGENCE OF A SCIENTIFICALLY VALIDATED TOOL

Capt. Stephen M. Coates, USN, Deputy Chaplain of the Marine Corps

Spiritual fitness is paramount to victory. **Marine Corps Doctrinal Procedure 1 Warfighting** lays it out in the opening pages: “We prevail over friction through strength of spirit.” When warfighters are strengthened spiritually, they are better prepared for combat and for life.

But how do we measure the strength of spirit? Can a scale indicate spiritual readiness?

Not likely. It is hard to imagine a “go, no go” score of any kind marking the spiritual readiness of an individual or a unit. Yet leaders sense when Marines, individually and collectively, possess the will and the purpose to endure and overcome. But what if a tool could point out existing strengths and identify areas needing attention?

We would not be surprised to hear similar guidance from a physical trainer. “Your upper body strength is impressive. But for overall fitness you can’t skip leg day and expect it to not impact your overall fitness.” In a similar fashion, could an assessment effectively reveal areas of our spirit ripe for greater attention?

Navy chaplains, under the guidance of Capt. David Alexander (Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command San Diego and Faculty Chair, U.S. Navy Clinical Pastoral Education Programs) has developed a tool providing evidence-based means to support the spiritual fitness of all Marines, whether they are decidedly religious or not.

With just 19 questions, the **Assessment Battery for Spiritual Readiness**, known as **ABSR**, assesses spiritual strength across six accessible touchpoints to build a more resilient and ready force:

- Meaning and Purpose
- Sacrificial Service
- Personal Connection with God (for those whose worldview includes belief in God)
- Forgiveness
- Hope
- Gratitude

Each domain is supported by three or four questions, statistically proven to provide reliable feedback and consistent use across all military settings.

The tool was scientifically validated in August 2025 by the Navy Research Lab with a sample test group of more than 500 military personnel.

The findings were clear: The ABSR is practical and psychometrically sound.

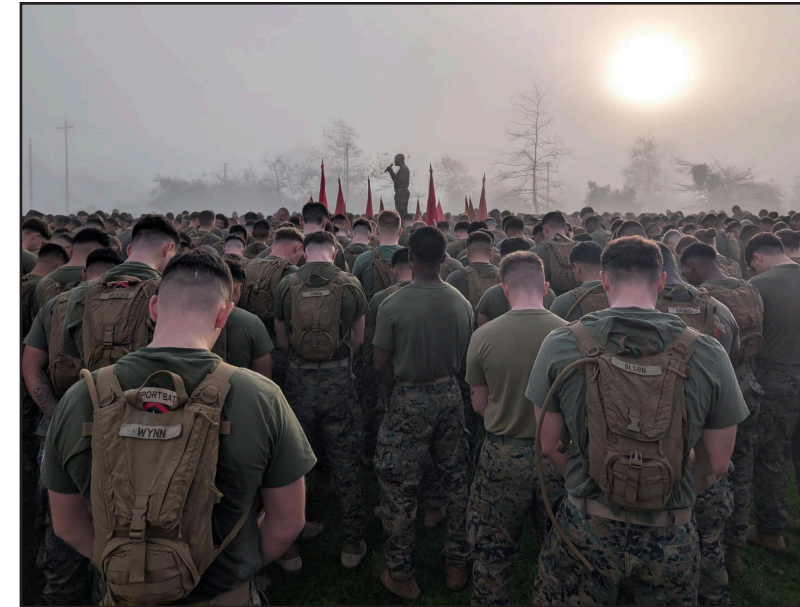
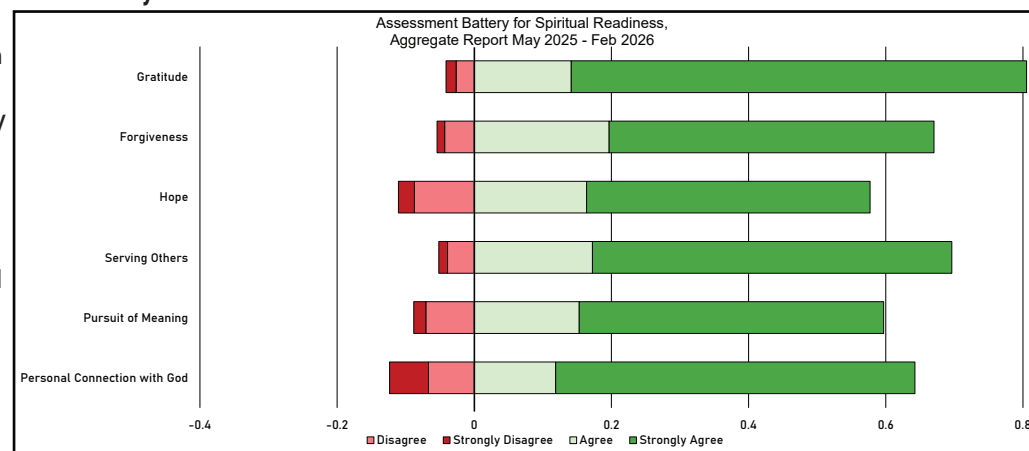
Lower scores on this scale are associated with higher stress and a greater risk of suicidal thoughts.

Higher scores on this scale are associated with greater resilience, quality of life, well-being and fortitude.

It is not an impersonal tool. Rather, it provides immediate feedback and directs Marines – not to an app – but to a conversation (with their chaplain, if they like) with tailored, personal attention to actively strengthen their spirit. The potential for this data to help understand our Marines is powerful!

As acknowledged, there is no standard score representing “readiness.”

For the category, **Personal Connection with God**, Marines can choose N/A and it will not impact their overall score. To date, 75% of respondents have chosen to answer these questions.



U.S. Navy Chaplain, Lt. Cdr. Jamal Scarlett, Regimental Chaplain for the 11th Marine Regiment, delivers the morning prayer during a Saint Barbara's Day celebration at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Jan. 8, 2026. The prayer was offered in support of the Marines celebrating Saint Barbara, the patron saint of artillerymen. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Capt. Jennifer Parchem)

The tool was designed to help individuals. Nevertheless, when leaders are introduced to this tool and these traits, they are eager to see the scores aggregated.

Full disclosure: this tool has not been validated for aggregate integrity. But the aggregate scores of nearly 2,000 assessments reveal an interesting pattern: among our personnel, **Gratitude** and **Serving Others** are strong; the strength of spirit in our Corps and in our Marines.

Undeniably, **Forgiveness** and **Hope** score lowest.

Forgiveness includes the capacity to forgive others as well as to receive forgiveness, even of oneself. Leaders know the relationship between hopelessness and suicide well.

By both measuring and strengthening spirit, we protect Marines from perceived stress that can lead to destructive behaviors and degraded readiness.

The ABSR provides clear targets to move beyond guesswork and specifically address Marines' specific paths to enhance overall grit.

The learning curve for data analytics continues to be steep but the time has come to move beyond just talking about spiritual fitness.

It is time to measure inner strength and then train accordingly.

If you are interested in taking the ABSR or have Marines interested in the ABSR contact your chaplain.

## SAFETY SPOTLIGHTS



1st Lt. Jessica Ray  
Ground Safety Officer  
1st Intelligence Battalion  
Camp Pendleton, California

1st Lt. Jessica Ray, a logistics officer by trade, assumed the duties of Ground Safety Officer for the 1st Intelligence Battalion at Camp Pendleton, California, in May 2024.

Through exceptional oversight and meticulous attention to detail, she spearheaded the revitalization of her command's Marine Corps Safety Management System, enhancing the safety culture and ensuring compliance with requirements to provide a safe workplace for personnel.

She is instrumental in developing and ongoing advocacy of multiple ground safety initiatives and critical facility improvement projects. On top of her duties as the battalion logistics officer, she planned, directed and executed

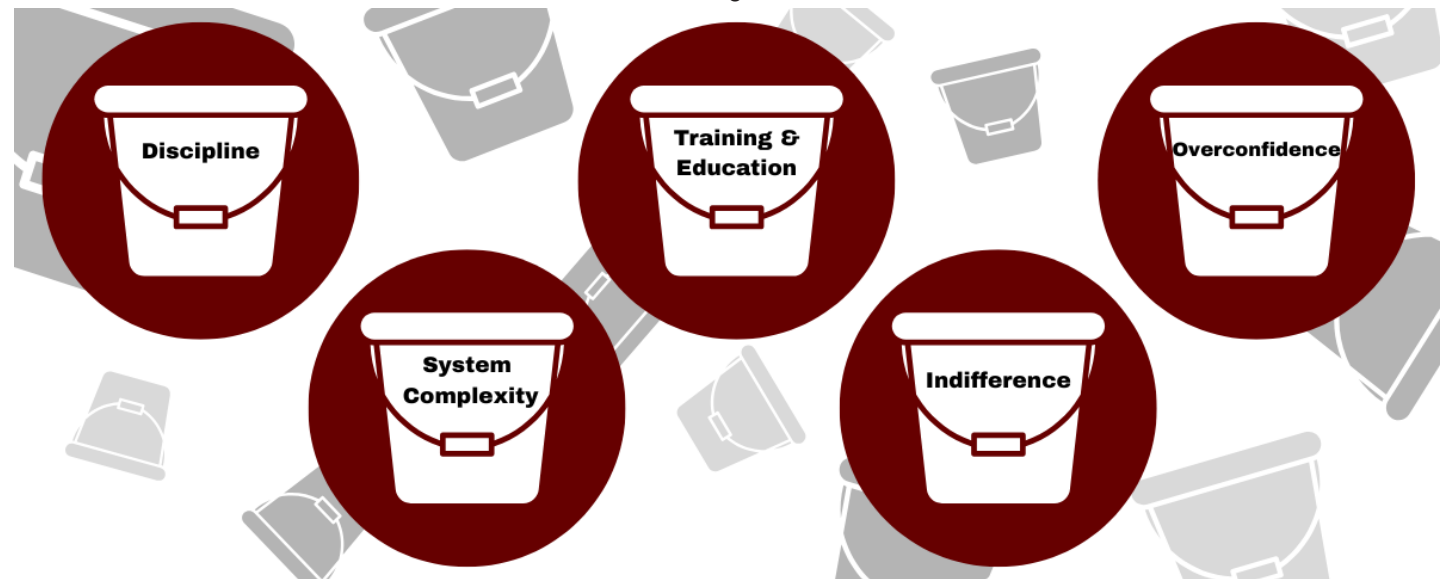
numerous safety-related stand-downs and inspections, and is recognized for managing a model program with best practices.

By conducting comprehensive surveys and translating the feedback into action, she drove meaningful organizational change and fostered a more engaged safety culture.

Her approach to safety has been defined by an infectious positive outlook and a relentless drive for care and excellence. This combination consistently yields measurable reductions in workplace hazards and mishap frequency. She will be executing permanent change of station orders this summer to Naval Postgraduate School. Fair Winds and Following Seas, Marine!

# COMBATING NON-COMPLIANCE

By Brig Gen. Sean Hoewing, USMC, Director, Risk Management Directorate and Members of Risk Management Directorate Staff



Let's talk about something that's costing us. It's not a new enemy weapon system or a budget cut. It's something much closer to home: non-compliance. The decision to take a shortcut, ignore a warning or just "pencil-whip" a checklist. We've all seen it. We might have even done it. But are we really thinking about the consequences?

To get a handle on this, we looked at why these mishaps happen and grouped them into several main "buckets." Of course, this list isn't all-inclusive; this is just the way my simple brain breaks it down. See if any of this sounds familiar.

## 1. Training & Education

This isn't just about the initial instruction we get at the schoolhouse. It's about continuous learning. When we don't fully understand the "why" behind a procedure, it becomes just another box to check. Effective training ensures we grasp not only how to do a task but why it must be done a specific way.

**Example:** A unit was conducting blackout driving in a training area with its incidental drivers. A driver misjudged the distance, veered off the dirt road and drove into a ditch. The Marines were thrown forward, bruised, concussed and the vehicle was damaged.

The investigation report noted the driver had done minimal blackout training in the incidental driver's course and none since.

A crawl, walk, run approach to this training could have prevented this mishap.

## 2. Overconfidence

"I've done this a thousand times." Famous last words. Experience is invaluable, but it can also breed complacency. Overconfidence tricks us into believing we can skip steps because we're seasoned pros who know better. The reality is, standards exist because even pros can make mistakes.

**Example:** A Marine howitzer gunnery section was given a fire mission; the section chief ordered fire, and as the lanyard was pulled, the gun misfired. Following standing operating procedures (SOP), the section chief ordered two more lanyard pulls to try to get the cannon to fire. Before this occurred, a Marine, confident in how to get the gun back up, reached toward the loose magazine to properly seat the primer (which is an SOP step...later) without being directed by the section chief.

As the Marine attempted to reseal the magazine, the cannon fired, and the recoil mechanism struck his arm, fracturing it. The report noted that there is a strong culture among young artillerymen to be the fastest, which, if unchecked, can lead to severe injury or worse.

Don't get ahead of yourself, even if you think you know the procedure. The steps are in order for a reason.

## 3. Discipline

This is the bedrock of everything we do. Think about vehicle maintenance. You're tired and decide to "pencil-whip" the Preventive Maintenance Checks and Services checklist, skipping the torque check on the lug nuts because they "look fine."

Hours later, that same vehicle's wheel flies off during a convoy, causing a catastrophic rollover. That simple failure of discipline just had disastrous consequences. It's not about paperwork; it's about our commitment to doing the right thing, every time, because lives are on the line.

**Example:** During a training exercise, Marines in the back of a 7-Ton Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement (MTVR) were upgraded to Condition 1 weapons (magazine inserted, round in the chamber). They remained in Condition 1 for approximately six to seven hours. Over the course of the event, weapons-handling discipline deteriorated in the overcrowded vehicle, packed with personnel and excess gear. Some of the team leaned their weapons on packs or against the MTVR cab, including the mishap Marine's M27 Infantry Automatic Rifle (IAR).

It was determined that the IARs safety selector was inadvertently bumped off safe. When the Marine repositioned, an object engaged the trigger, resulting in an unintentional discharge, fatally wounding the Marine. At no point should any service member ever fail to maintain positive control of a Condition 1 weapon. Strict adherence to weapons-handling fundamentals remains the final safeguard against preventable negligent-discharge fatalities or injuries.



U.S. Marines assigned to I Marine Expeditionary Force and Philippine contractors onload a Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement onto a Philippine barge in Cagayan de Oro, Philippines, March 17, 2026. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Madison M. Luciano)

## 4. System Complexity

Sometimes, gear or guidance itself is just too complicated. When a procedure is overly complex or a system isn't user-friendly, it's human nature to find a "workaround." This isn't always malicious; it's often just an attempt to get the job done more efficiently. But these unofficial shortcuts introduce unknown risks.

**Example:** A power grid was set up with two generators in parallel to support a field training exercise. One of the generators failed, so a Marine who was qualified to troubleshoot it attempted to remove the wiring from the load studs. He was shocked instantly because the unit was still energized by the other generator. He was medically evaluated and placed on light, limited duty for a week

following the incident. The Marine, confident in his abilities, immediately tried to fix the problem before scanning the environment and ensuring the equipment was in the proper state (de-energized) before starting maintenance procedures. Checklists and sequential maintenance procedures are established to mitigate the risk of doing this very thing.



U.S. Marines with Kilo Battery, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, fire a 155mm round from an M777A2 howitzer during a battery movement to contact exercise at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, California, March 6, 2026. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Emilio Murphy)

## 5. Indifference

This is the most corrosive mindset of all. It's the "who cares?" attitude. It's a complete disconnect from the mission and a disregard for the well-being of your fellow Marines.

It may even be as simple as not understanding each task we take on is as important as the next one. Every job and every task matters.

**Example:** A group of Marines were conducting explosive demolition training. The Marines set up several charges and then occupied the designated bunker to await the explosion. One Marine decided to hold his phone outside the bunker to record the explosion, against his fellow Marine's advice. The charges detonated and fragmentation struck the Marine's unprotected hand. No matter how well-designed a range is or how clear its regulations are, it cannot protect you from your indifference.

## The Sobering Statistics

Still think taking a small shortcut is no big deal? Let's look at the data. Between fiscal years 2023 and 2025, about 14% of all major mishaps included at least one human factor that related to non-compliance.

**Here's what that 14% during FY23-25 looks like:**  
**More than 650 Mishaps**  
**Fatalities 32**  
**Total cost more than \$723,350,000**

Continued on next page

We lost 32 Marines, not due to enemy action, but to mishaps involving non-compliance related human factors as contributing elements... We also burned through over \$723 million, money that could have gone to better gear, training and facilities.

Worse, we know the data is incomplete. The reality is many mishap reports don't necessarily identify a non-compliance factor when determining the cause of the mishap. In short, the problem is probably worse than we even know.

But don't despair. There's good news... we can easily solve this problem. The solution is in our DNA.

**So What's the Ask?**

The solution isn't more rules. It's simply a recommitment to the discipline that defines us as Marines. It's about leaders ensuring standards are met and junior Marines having the moral courage to do the right thing, even when no one is watching.

The next time you're tempted to take a shortcut, remember the incredible losses we have already suffered. Your signature on that checklist is a promise, and the lives of your brothers and sisters in arms depend on it. This is a problem we can fix.



U.S. Marines with 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, currently forward deployed with 4th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division as part of the Unit Deployment Program, make movement to rehearse squad attacks during the Korean Marine Exchange Program 26.1 on Suseong-Ri, Pohang, South Korea, March 25, 2026. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Joaquin Dela Torre)

## RISK MANAGEMENT INFORMATION IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE ANNOUNCED

RMI Streamlined Incident Reporting (SIR) was released throughout the Department Of the Navy in 2020 to promote the Navy's digital transformation. RMI must be used for reporting, recording and analyzing all mishaps, hazards (including near misses), and incidents, per OPNAV M-5102.1. RMI is Department of War CAC-enabled, and access links are available on the Naval Safety Command website at <https://navalsafetycommand.navy.mil/>.

After May 1, 2026, input of safety-related information into any systems other than RMI is prohibited. Safety-related information includes injuries and illnesses, which are already required, as well as safety program management information, such as inspections, hazards from inspections, medical surveillance, motorcycle rider data and other information required by MCO 5100.29 that has been maintained in other systems in the past.

For help with RMI, visit the Navy Enterprise support center at <https://nesd-dwp.onbmc.mil/>. Sign in with your CAC when prompted. You can view Knowledge Articles, chat with an agent or submit and track your help desk requests. For additional information, go to the RMI page on the Naval Safety Command website: <https://navalsafetycommand.navy.mil/RMI/> RMI Help Files, User Guides and videos for using RMI SIR can be found in the left-hand menu on the RMI main page. See support contact information below, RMI Help Desk Hours of Operation are Monday- Friday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. EST. To establish an RMI account for official reporting, visit [afsas.safety.af.mil/](https://afsas.safety.af.mil/)

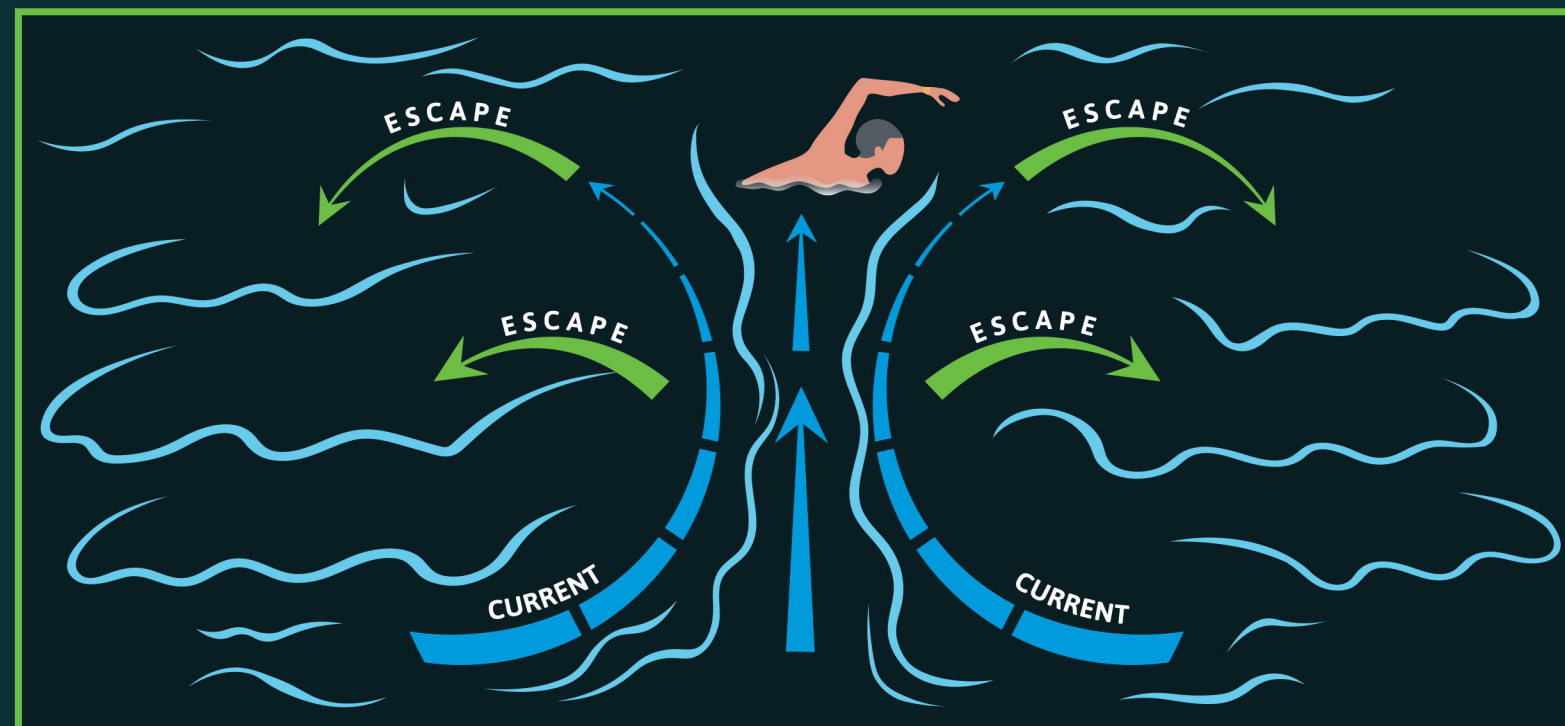


RISK MANAGEMENT INFORMATION  
RMI Support Center: (833) NESDNOW (637-3669), [nesd@nesd-mail.onbmc.mil](mailto:nesd@nesd-mail.onbmc.mil)  
AFSAS Help Desk at (505) 846-6376; DSN: 246-6376; [AFSAS.AFSEC@us.af.mil](mailto:AFSAS.AFSEC@us.af.mil)

# BE READY FOR RIP CURRENTS



Rip currents are powerful currents of water moving away from shore. They can sweep even the strongest swimmer away from shore or their desired path. If at all possible, swim within eyesight of the nearest lifeguard.



**SAFETY PRECAUTIONS**

- If possible, swim near a lifeguard.
- Don't swim alone.
- Heed warning flags on the beach.
- Develop strong swimming skills. For information about swimming classes for all ages, please visit your local Semper Fit.

**CAUGHT IN A RIP CURRENT?**

- Relax. Rip currents don't pull you under.
- Don't swim against the current.
- Swim parallel to the shore until you're out of the rip. Then swim to shore at an angle.
- If you can't escape the current, float or tread water. Yell or wave to gain attention for assistance.

**AQUATIC READINESS - MARINES**

- The Marine Corps is an amphibious force designed to execute operations near shorelines. Marines must be proficient swimmers.
- Rip currents have claimed the lives of Sailors and Marines diving, snorkeling and surfing.
- The Marine Corps provides a Swim Survival Skills Training (S3T) Program with a progressive swim curriculum to aid Marines in passing swim qualification. For more information, visit the link below: [www.fitness.marines.mil/water-survival](http://www.fitness.marines.mil/water-survival)

\*Make sure to validate the best strategy for rip currents in your specific area, as the shape and behavior of the rip currents may vary. Your local installation safety office is great resource for recreational water safety information.



# TRITIUM SAFETY

## A LEADER'S GUIDE TO BROKEN EQUIPMENT

Lt. Thomas Kearns, USN, Radiation Health Officer, Risk Management Directorate, Safety Division

Tritium is a radioactive isotope of hydrogen used to illuminate sights, compasses and other equipment. Leaders must know the proper procedures for handling, reporting and disposing of compromised equipment containing tritium.

### Understanding the Hazard

Tritium (H-3) is a key component in much of our warfighting equipment, most notably the all rifle combat optics, lensatic compasses, mortar sights, various other weapon sights and in most standard watches with illumination. Tritium is a low-energy beta-emitting radioactive gas that, when combined with a phosphor, creates a reliable, long-lasting glow without any need for batteries, a critical advantage in all lighting conditions.

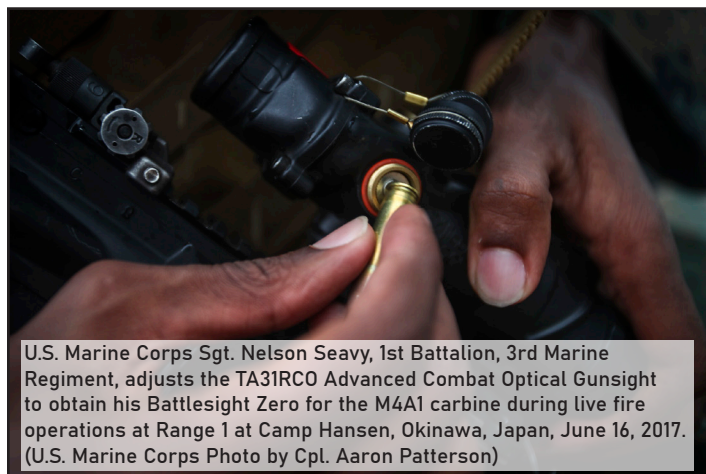
The tritium is contained within small, sealed glass vials, which are in turn protected by the equipment's rugged housing. The risk of exposure is negligible unless this internal vial is broken. Tritium's beta particles cannot penetrate the skin. The hazard primarily arises from internal exposure. If the gas is inhaled, ingested or absorbed through an open wound.

Even in the case of a breach, the health risk is low. Tritium is a lighter-than-air gas and dissipates rapidly in open environments.

The body also naturally purges it with a biological half-life of about 10 days. However, adhering to proper procedures is non-negotiable to mitigate potential risks and maintain readiness.



U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Austin Riveting, uses a lensatic compass during exercise Burmese Chase 25 at Marine Corps Outlying Field Atlantic, North Carolina, July 30, 2025. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Adam Scalin)



U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Nelson Seavy, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, adjusts the TA31RCO Advanced Combat Optical Gunsight to obtain his Battlesight Zero for the M4A1 carbine during live fire operations at Range 1 at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan, June 16, 2017. (U.S. Marine Corps Photo by Cpl. Aaron Patterson)

### Marines should NEVER:

- Do not disassemble an optic or other tritium-containing device.
- Do not inhale directly from the broken device.
- Do not continue to use compromised equipment.

### Immediate Actions

Any Marine who breaks a piece of equipment containing tritium must take the following steps immediately:

- 1. Announce** - Immediately notify your leader or the nearest unit leader.
- 2. Ventilate** - If indoors, move to a well-ventilated area or outdoors if tactically feasible. Tritium is lighter than air and will disperse quickly, reducing the chance of inhalation.
- 3. Isolate** - Do not attempt to repair the item. If possible, place the broken equipment into a sealed container. A plastic zip-top bag is ideal. A meal ready to eat beverage mix bag is suitable in field conditions. This prevents further release of tritium and contains any contaminated debris.
- 4. Decontaminate** - Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water as soon as possible after handling the broken item to remove any potential surface contamination. Do not eat drink or smoke during decontamination.
- 5. Report** - Notify unit ground safety manager who will notify the base radiological officer.

Unit leaders are responsible for their Marines' safety and the proper handling of all equipment. When a tritium-containing device is compromised, leaders must orchestrate the response.

### Want to know more?

[https://flankspeed.sharepoint-mil.us/sites/NAVSEA\\_RadiologicalControls/RASP/SitePages/USMC.aspx](https://flankspeed.sharepoint-mil.us/sites/NAVSEA_RadiologicalControls/RASP/SitePages/USMC.aspx)

# SAFETY MISSION

# CRITICAL

The period between Memorial Day and Labor Day is known as the "101 Critical Days of Summer"—a crucial time for Marines, Sailors, and their families to take advantage of the warm weather for well-deserved recreation and recovery.

However, annual statistics consistently show that lapses in judgment while enjoying the sun and surf can negatively impact the readiness of our force.

We have a collective duty to ensure our fellow Marines and Sailors return to their units mission-driven and warfighter-ready.

Stay engaged and informed. Visit the link below or scan our QR code for further information and guidance.

Remember: safety isn't luck—it's leadership.



101 CRITICAL DAYS OF SUMMER





# FY25 MARINE CORPS SAFETY EXCELLENCE AWARD

This award is presented each fiscal year to one officer, one junior enlisted, one senior enlisted and one government civilian employee who made the most significant contribution to the Marine Corps Safety Management System.

All nominees are commended for significant contributions made toward reducing mishaps, increasing mission readiness and preserving our most precious asset – our Marines, Sailors and civilians. Congratulations to all for a job well done.

## Senior Enlisted (E-7 and Above): Gunnery Sgt. Brandon Sydow



For outstanding dedication and exceptional performance of duty while serving as Ground Safety Manager (GSM) and Deputy Fire Marshal (DFM), Headquarters and Support Battalion, School of Infantry - East (SOI-E), Gunnery Sgt. Brandon Sydow has been recognized as the Marine Corps Safety Excellence Award senior enlisted recipient for Fiscal Year 2025. As the GSM for the command, he expertly conducted nine comprehensive safety inspections across five high-risk areas. His implementation of a comprehensive safety survey garnered notable recognition and fostered a proactive safety culture. He distinguished himself by spearheading the safety inspection for the SOI-E, achieving zero findings. Demonstrating a keen eye for detail, he identified and rectified critical safety deficiencies, including a non-certified overhead crane in the motor transport maintenance bay, and improperly stored batteries in the communication vault, potentially preventing serious injuries, mission degradation and ensured operational readiness. As the command's DFM, he conducted thorough building inspections, identifying and correcting nine major fire safety violations, which significantly reduced fire risks within workspaces and barracks. His diligence ensured the operational readiness of critical safety equipment, including the management and oversight of the automated external defibrillators serviceability and securing the purchase of 15 new fire extinguisher cabinets for the bachelor enlisted quarters. By his exceptional professionalism, unwavering dedication to the safety and health of the command and his selfless devotion to duty, he has reflected great credit upon himself and is keeping in the highest tradition of the United States Marine Corps and United States Naval Services.



## Officer: 1st Lt. Vito Santarsiero



For superior Safety Management System implementation and leadership provided to First Marine Division, 1st Lt. Vito Santarsiero has been recognized as the Marine Corps Safety Excellence Award, Officer, for fiscal year 2025. Over the course of his tenure, he expertly managed safety operations for the Marine Corps' largest Major Subordinate Command consisting of 26 subordinate programs and 19,000 personnel. he effectively served as the de facto Safety Director (GS-12 equivalent) in the absence of a permanent civilian, ensuring program continuity through a four-month manpower gap without a Safety Chief. Implementing a proactive inspection program with mentorship for subordinate staff that included developing training materials, his technical assist visits and inspections helped bring unit programs into compliance while correcting 45 findings and 38 discrepancies.

He served on seven Safety Investigation Boards that improved the risk management culture for Marines in both garrison and deployed in support of Department of War priorities. Furthermore, his efforts in leading the Motorcycle Mentorship Program and creating "The Liberty Brief" holiday safety packets for small unit leaders significantly enhanced the division's overall safety posture. By professional acumen, unwavering initiative, and selfless dedication to promoting safety in the First Marine Division, he reflected great credit upon themselves and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps



and the United States Naval Service.



## Enlisted (E-6 and Below): Staff Sgt. John McCarthy



For superior achievement in dramatically improving the command's operational safety culture and risk management in accordance with the Marine Corps Safety Management System, Staff Sgt. John A. McCarthy has been recognized as the Marine Corps Safety Excellence Award enlisted recipient for Fiscal Year 2025. Since assumption of duties, he has exemplified the Marine Corps' commitment to Operational Safety and Environmental Stewardship. His visionary leadership led to zero major safety violations, zero reportable mishaps and 100 percent regulatory compliance across all inspection categories, directly reinforcing the warfighting capability of Marine Wing Support Squadron 373. He demonstrated exceptional foresight and technical expertise by successfully executing three environmental and three hazardous waste inspections, resulting in zero discrepancies across all six audits. He further secured unit readiness by coordinating the safe disposal of 6,000 gallons of petroleum, oils and lubricants, eliminating major hazardous material storage risks. This accomplishment was underpinned by the execution of more than 50 comprehensive safety walkthroughs and the implementation of a unit-level safety budget, which fostered a pervasive culture of continuous improvement and hazard prevention across the Squadron. By proactively identifying, assessing and mitigating operational risk, he has made the most significant contribution to Command's Safety Management System, directly preserving the welfare of more than 500 Marines and Sailors. His relentless professionalism, initiative and tireless dedication reflect the highest standards of the Marine Corps and are truly worthy of this prestigious recognition.

## Civilian: Ms. Alura Acosta



For exceptional performance as the Tactical Safety Specialist for the Department of Safety and Standardization, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing, (MAW) II Marine Expeditionary Force, and the Civilian of the Year for Fiscal Year 2025, Alura Acosta's actions and perseverance successfully positioned 2d MAW at the forefront of the Marine Corps' initiative to promote safety-related programs, including the Fall Protection Program and Ground Safety for Marines.

Her time management skills, multitasking abilities and extensive expertise in safety had a significant and positive impact on the safety of more than 11,000 Marines, Sailors and Department of War civilians.

She leveraged an extensive network of contacts within the Department of the Navy, federal agencies and private sector businesses to generate fiscal savings. Her initiative successfully procured over \$2 million worth of fall protection gear for the most at-risk commands within 2d MAW. This enabled the Wing to maintain a remarkably low injury rate attributed to falls from aircraft and resulted in zero injuries reported during the Atlantic Alliance exercise across 10 different locations. Additionally, she contributed to the operational planning for Joint Exercise Cold Response 26, conducted on-site surveys aimed at mitigating risks for the operation that spanned four countries, more than a dozen airfields, forward arming and refueling point sites. She deployed with the Marines of 2d MAW twice during 2025, providing real-time operational risk management to commanders and their staff as needed. Her many contributions to ground safety proved to be pivotal in increasing safety awareness and prevention for all commands in 2d Marine Aircraft Wing.

## MARINE CORPS SAFETY AWARD

For the best maintained and most outstanding command safety management system

- Marine Corps Air Station, Camp Pendleton, California
- Marine Corps Air Station, Iwakuni, Japan
- Marine Corps Air Station, New River, North Carolina
- Marine Corps Logistics Base, Albany, Georgia
- Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, California





# ON THE RANGE

Courtesy of Range and Training Area Management

As modern weapons and technologies continue proliferating throughout the service, it can be difficult for institutional range safety policy to keep pace with systems delivered directly to the warfighter. This increasing pace of advancement requires individuals tasked with range safety matters onboard installations to have the training and education necessary to make informed decisions in keeping with both the letter and the spirit of MCO 3570.1D. The Range Operations Professional Development (ROPD) program delivers education based on policy, by the people who help craft it to close the gap between the cubicle and the range.

## Forging the Modern Range Professional: A New Era of Learning

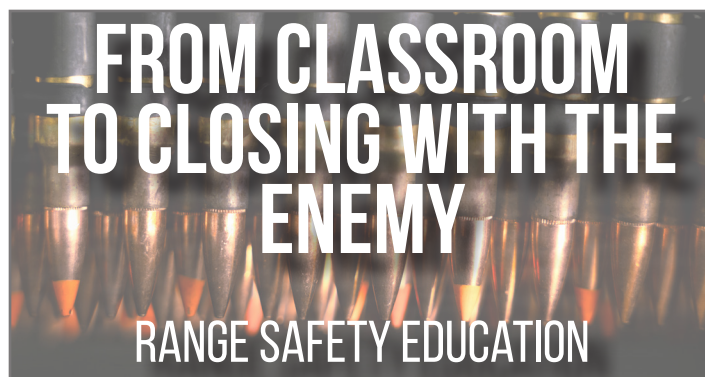
The successful modernization of Marine Corps range safety, as seen in Ground Warrior Winter 2025 (pgs. 12-14), is only half the battle. The policies and tools are in place, but to truly prepare for the future fight, the Marine Corps is now revolutionizing how it trains and develops the range professionals at the heart of its live fire operations.

In concert with Training and Education Campaign Plan 2025, the ROPD program is undergoing a fundamental transformation, shifting from an industrial-age model of instruction to a dynamic, active-learning approach fit for the 21st-century warfighter.

## From Passive Lectures to Active Problem-Solving

For decades, professional military education has followed a learning model treating students as passive recipients of information, emphasizing rote memorization of regulations and standardized, lecture-based instruction. While effective for building baseline knowledge with low cognitive demand, this model is insufficient for the complex, ambiguous and rapidly evolving operational environments Marines face today.

Prioritizing the reciting of surface-level facts falls short in developing the critical thinking and adaptive decision-making skills required to manage a modern, multi-domain training area. The future of training requires a new philosophy: Active learning based on the adult learning model. This model puts the student at the center of the



A U.S. Marine with Scout Platoon, Battalion Landing Team 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, fires a Mark 22 Advanced Sniper Rifle during precision marksmanship sustainment training as part of Iron Fist 26 at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan, Feb. 26, 2026. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Alora Finigan)

educational experience. It is problem-based, collaborative and hands-on.

Instead of simply being told the rules, students are challenged to apply them in realistic, scenario-driven exercises.

This approach fosters a deeper understanding of the “why” behind the regulations, empowering range professionals

to make informed decisions, deconflict complex training events and safely integrate emerging technologies like drones and autonomous systems.

## Modernizing the Curriculum for a Modern Force

In accordance with USMC Training and Education guidance, this new philosophy is being integrated into the core curriculum for range professionals. Several key courses are being modernized to build leaders who are not just certified, but truly qualified to manage the modern range complex:

- Interservice Range Safety Course (M02KA7M): This Marine Corps and Army cornerstone range safety course is being reshaped to move beyond simple regulatory review. Students will engage in case studies, scenario-based learning and rigorous examination to analyze complex safety problems, ensuring they can apply the principles of MCO 3570.1D (Range Safety) appropriately.
- Range Managers Toolkit (RMTK) Course (M02HB3M): RMTK has traditionally focused on the “buttonology” of the underlying software (ArcGIS) rather than problem-solving skills necessary to produce accurate danger zones for live-fire training. The updated course will challenge students to use multiple RMTK zone tools simultaneously, more accurately reflecting how they are used in a range control. Learners will create training scenarios compliant with MCO 3570.1D. They will also be challenged to evaluate complete training packages and deconflict them, producing a graduate who can critically evaluate information and synthesize it into the overall training picture.
- Range Airspace Managers Course (M02YVZM): With the increasing congestion of training airspace, the improvements to this course address the integration of Unmanned Aircraft Systems, increased duties of the airspace manager and scenario-based training to provoke thoughtful discussion and learning in a rapidly evolving topic. Active-learning modules will require students to deconflict and manage Special Use Airspace. This course will be the first to receive a distance-learning prerequisite, hosted on the Marine Corps eLearning Ecosystem Moodle platform. This phased approach to learning increases retention and allows for advanced topics to be covered in greater depth.

## Bottom Line

The modernization of the ROPD program is a strategic investment in the safety, readiness and lethality of the Marine Corps. By embracing an active-learning model, the Corps is ensuring its range professionals have the skills, confidence and adaptability to support training for the future fight.



U.S. Marines with 12th Littoral Combat Team, 12th Marine Littoral Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, prepare to execute a company-sized attack during a Combined Arms Live-Fire Exercise at Rodriguez Live-Fire Complex, Republic of Korea, March 2, 2026. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Rodney Frye)

Just as MCO 3570.1D provided a modern framework for range safety, this educational overhaul will forge the modern leaders needed to execute it.

## Want to learn more?

Go to the Marine Corps Training Information Management System and search for the three Course IDs provided if interested in learning more. There you can find the locations, prerequisites and other information related to the courses. Contact your local range control with specific inquiries related to the programs of instruction.

We are listening to your feedback: Right now, you can impact the way these courses are modernized by providing detailed feedback and ideas in your end-of-course critiques of the current courses.



U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Christopher Garcia, a rifleman with Security Company, Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., loads a magazine during a live-fire range in Thurmont, Maryland, Feb. 25, 2026. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Matthew Morales)

# TRAIN SMARTER, FIGHT HARDER

## A DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH TO FITNESS SAFETY

USMC Capt. Francisco Curiel, Risk Management Directorate-Safety Division

In calendar year 2025, the Marine Corps achieved a significant 37% reduction in training mishaps, with reported incidents decreasing from 202 to 127.

This success stems from the implementation of data-informed policies, including rigorous Exertional Heat Injury prevention programs and mandatory Emergency Action Plans.

Despite these gains, junior Marines (E-1 to E-3) account for nearly 75% of all mishaps.

This article analyzes specific training events—the Physical Fitness Test (PFT), Combat Fitness Test (CFT), hiking operations, Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP), and Marine Corps Water Survival Training Program (MCWSTP)—to provide actionable leadership recommendations.

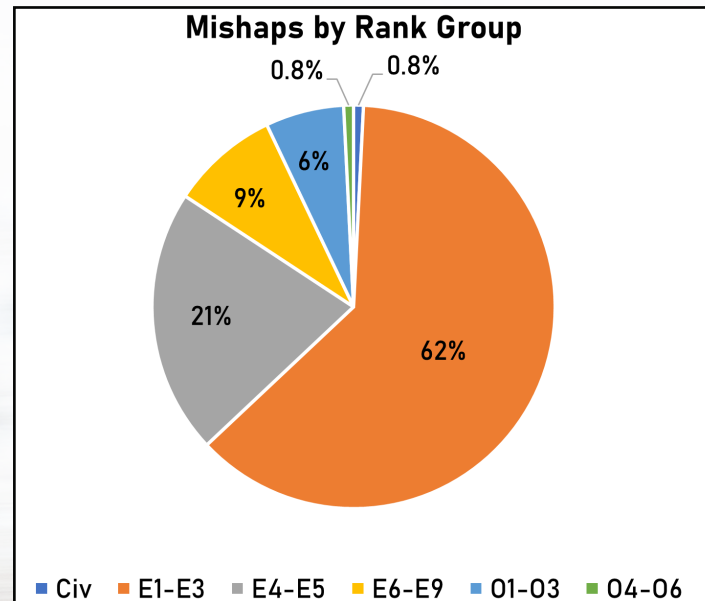
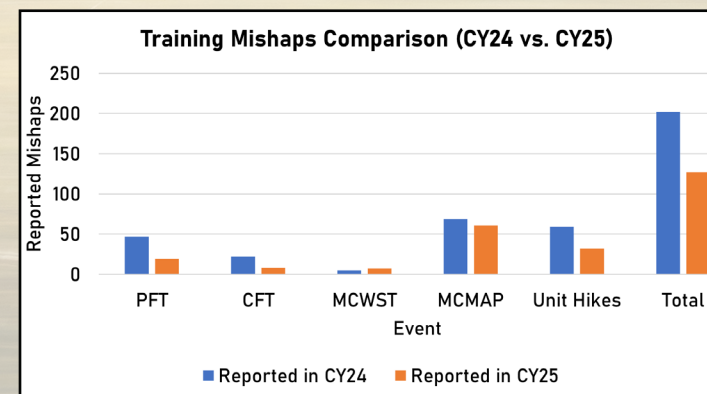
### Analysis of High-Intensity Fitness Events

The data identify a distinct correlation between environmental conditions, unit location and physiological preparation during PFT and hiking operations. While leaders actively attempt to mitigate heat through early morning scheduling, nutrition and hydration gaps persist among barracks-dwelling Marines.

### Physical Fitness Test

The majority of PFT injuries are heat-related and occur late in the season during the hottest months of the year. East Coast units experience a disproportionate number of these heat injuries, likely because high humidity exacerbates the heat index.

While leaders appropriately schedule these events during cooler morning hours, 68% of these mishaps involve Marines who are not properly hydrated or nourished.



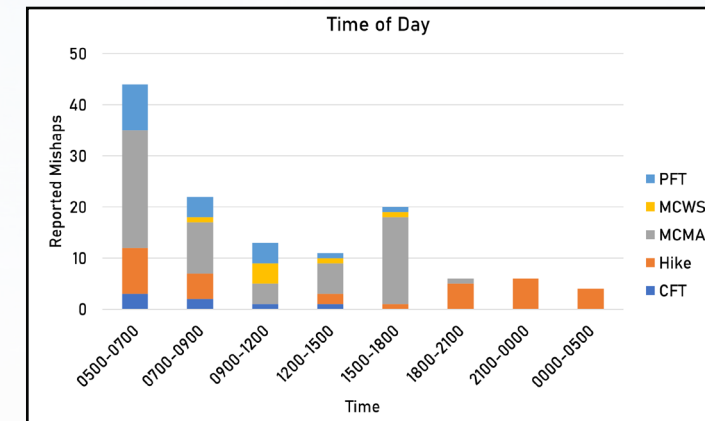
Because the vulnerable E-1 to E-3 demographic primarily resides in the barracks, early event times often conflict with mess hall hours. To mitigate this, leaders should conduct the PFT in cooler months when possible. For early morning events, units can order "cold wets" (electrolytes and hydration) delivered to the barracks the night prior or provide them at the event site to ensure physiological readiness.

### Hiking Operations

Similar to the PFT, most hike-related mishaps are heat-related. While injuries occur more frequently during the summer, they remain evenly distributed throughout the year.

The lowest injury incidence occurs between 0900 and 1800, indicating that leaders successfully avoid the hottest parts of the day. However, since many events occur between 1800 and 0900, Marines frequently lack access to the mess hall, leading to poor nutrition and hydration in 28% of reported mishaps. During hikes it is common to request food and beverage support, ensure your unit understand the contract with supporting mess hall limitations and request timelines.

Furthermore, East Coast units again show a disproportionate mishap rate, underscoring the compounding effect of humidity. Leaders must schedule hydration interventions before off-hours events. Additionally, for long-range troop movements planned months in advance, commands must establish strict "Go/No-Go" heat index criteria with pre-scheduled



transportation contingencies. To ensure Marines are properly hydrated for hikes PFT Commanders can also consider using unit funds to purchase commercial drink coolers and electrolyte beverage mix to ensure more flexible support to these events

### Combat Fitness Test

Unlike hikes and the PFT, CFT injuries are primarily musculoskeletal rather than heat-related. Because the CFT season concludes in the cooler months, the institution has successfully mitigated environmental risks. Furthermore, CFT injuries do not cluster in specific geographic locations.

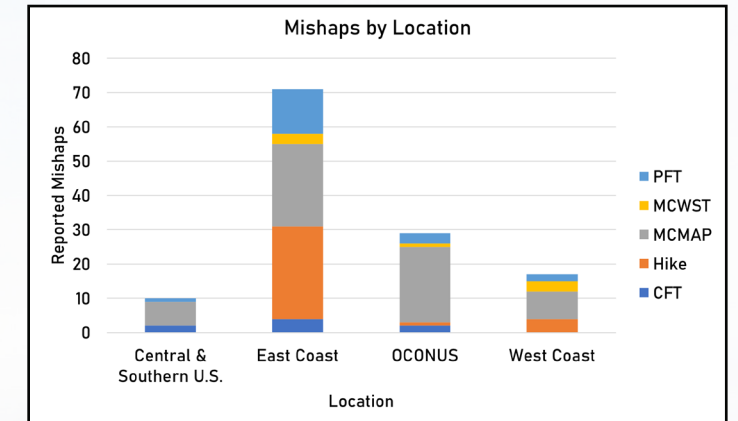
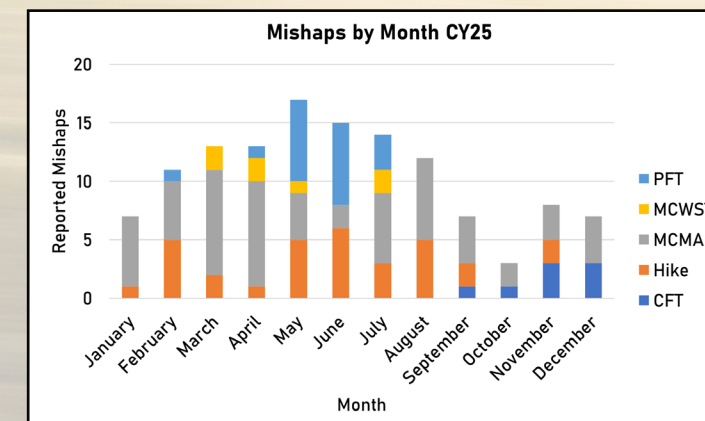
Mitigation of these musculoskeletal injuries requires leaders and command physical training representatives to ensure proper stretching before the event and to ensure Marines maintain a baseline level of fitness year-round. Traumatic Injuries in Martial Arts Training

### Marine Corps Martial Arts Program

MCMAP mishaps accounted for 56 mishaps during CY 25 MCMAP produces a high volume of fractures and dislocations. Detailed analysis reveals that improperly executed breakfalls and the application of excessive force during techniques drive the majority of these injuries.

### Deployment Tempo and Risk

A significant percentage of MCMAP mishaps occur OCONUS. This indicates that deployed Marines proactively



utilize their time to sustain martial arts training. However, sustaining traumatic injuries while deployed directly impacts immediate fleet readiness. Leaders must balance this training drive with strict safety oversight.

### Fatigue and Execution

While most fitness mishaps occur in the early morning, a large portion of MCMAP injuries occur late in the duty day, between 1500 and 1800.

Fatigue directly impacts a Marines ability to focus and stay concentrated, by conducting MCMAP later in the day Marines may not pay attention to detail on proper break fall techniques and executing a technique properly on a partner to be effective, but not injury your training partner.

Because leadership presence often decreases toward the end of the business day, supervision lapses can compound this risk.

During expected hot weather, leaders can request through the installation commander for cold wet support.

### Aggression Management

During grappling or sparring, adrenaline and innate Marine competitiveness frequently cause personnel lacking extensive martial arts experience to abandon restraint.

Dedicated leadership supervision is essential to manage this intensity. Instructors and leaders must continuously educate Marines on the risks of over-aggression, emphasizing that an avoidable training injury degrades the combat readiness of the entire unit.

### Evolving the Marine Corps Water Survival Training Program

An analysis of the seven-calendar year 25 MCWSTP mishaps, which all occurred during entry-level training, found that injuries overwhelmingly resulted from individual human factors—such as improper technique, panic and pre-existing health issues—rather than systemic flaws in the curriculum.

Continued on next page

The redesigned MCWSTP (governed by MCO 1500.52E and MARADMIN 086/26), slated for implementation in October 2026, directly counters these individual failure points.

The program introduces a rigorous, five-tiered progressive qualification system designed to methodically build skill and confidence, thereby reducing execution errors and panic.

It addresses health-related risks through enhanced pre-screening and continuous, career-long training.

Simultaneously, the updated policy drives a cultural shift by explicitly empowering instructors to halt training the moment a risk is identified, ensuring that institutional safety protocols always override a Marine's personal drive to push beyond safe limits.

**Conclusion**

The Marine Corps has demonstrated that data-informed policy effectively reduces training mishaps.

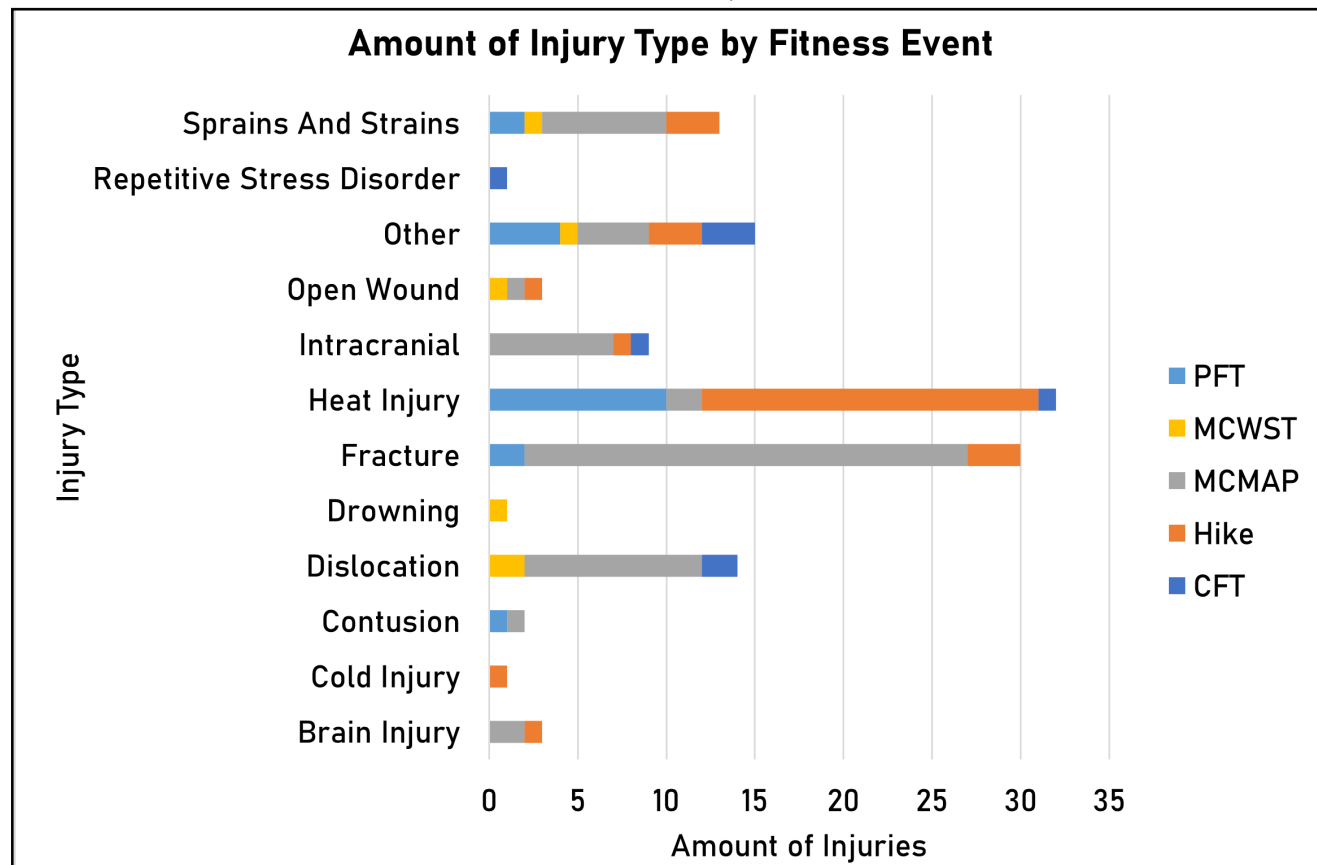
However, further reducing the elevated mishap rate among junior Marines requires leaders to aggressively manage the logistics of nutrition and hydration, particularly for personnel residing in the barracks.

By synchronizing training schedules with physiological requirements and maintaining high-visibility supervision, the Corps can further protect its most valuable asset: the individual Marine.



U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Isabella Renaud, a Marine with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, conducts maneuver under fire event during a Combat Fitness Test (CFT) on Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island S.C., Jan. 27, 2026. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Jordy Morales)

Background pg 26-27: U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Hector Solorio, an Arizona native and a data systems administrator with the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit executes a fireman's carry during a field meet combat fitness test relay race at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Nov. 25, 2025. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Osmar VasquezHernandez)



# SUMMER SAFETY

TIPS TO STAY SAFE IN THE SUN AND WATER!



<p><b>DRINK LOTS OF WATER</b></p> <p>Carry water with you and sip often. Skip alcohol when it's hot — it dries you out.</p>	<p><b>NO ALCOHOL NEAR WATER</b></p> <p>Drinking alcohol makes it harder to swim, balance, and think clearly. It also raises your risk of drowning.</p>	<p><b>DON'T DRINK AND BOAT!</b></p> <p>Alcohol is the #1 cause of deadly boating accidents. Boating under the influence is against the law and can mean fines or jail.</p>	<p><b>USE THE BUDDY SYSTEM</b></p> <p>Always swim or boat with a friend or group — don't go alone.</p>
<p><b>STAY COOL</b></p> <p>Take breaks from the sun in the shade or indoors to avoid heat exhaustion.</p>	<p><b>LEARN TO SWIM</b></p> <p>If you're new to swimming, take lessons that match your age and skill level. If you have children, sign them up for lessons at a young age. But never leave children alone near water — even for a minute.</p>	<p><b>WEAR A LIFE JACKET</b></p> <p>Everyone should wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket during water activities.</p>	
<p><b>PROTECT YOUR SKIN</b></p> <p>Use sunscreen (SPF 30+), wear hats, sunglasses, and light clothing. Reapply sunscreen after swimming.</p>	<p><b>KEEP FIRST AID KIT HANDY</b></p> <p>Pack a small kit with bandages, antiseptic, and any medications you could need.</p>	<p><b>KNOW THE WEATHER</b></p> <p>Check forecasts before heading out. Leave the water if you see lightning or storms.</p>	



For more safety tips on the water, please check out the official website of the U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Division, or the American Red Cross.

If you need to talk to someone about your alcohol use, contact your local Substance Assessment and Counseling Center (SACC).

# THE BOOK ENDS

Master Gunnery Sgt. David R. Dahl, Senior Enlisted Advisor, Headquarters Marine Corps Risk Management Directorate

Prior to assuming this billet, if you had asked me, as an experienced infantry operations chief, what the most dangerous thing Ground Combat Element (GCE) Marines do, my answer would have most likely been either company-supported live-fire attacks or helicopter-inserted operations in an urban environment. Why do we think this way? Because mishaps involving training imprint on our organizational memory.

This leads to hyperfocus among commanders and their staffs to ensure every operational detail of a future training event is planned for and every risk is mitigated to the maximum extent possible. Gunners, the Aviation Department of Safety and Standardization, Operations Chiefs, Operations Officers and many others who plan training within the Marine Corps are the world's best at planning safe, yet effective, training.

The focus on risk-based tactical planning, which you know as Risk Management, has led to relatively small training mishap numbers. Over five years, from FY21-25, live-fire training incidents accounted for less than 4% of on-duty, work-related ground fatalities. Statistically, we lose more Marines during physical training than we do during live-fire training. So, if live fire isn't where we're losing Marines, where is the problem? The answer I give to every commander who will listen is "on the book ends."

The book ends are the periods before and after a training event, not including the training event itself. The best way to describe this is institutionally: We are extremely good at mitigating risk from range hot to range cold but we have areas to improve before and after time at the range. The root cause of this organizational problem is a concept well known to safety professionals: "work as expected versus work as performed."



U.S. Marines with Force Reconnaissance Platoon, Maritime Raid Force, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, fast rope out of a U.S. Navy MH-60S Seahawk assigned to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 25, during a fast rope exercise in the Philippine Sea, Feb. 12, 2026. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Victor Gurrrola)



U.S. Marines with 2nd Marine Division participate in a live-fire machine gun range as part of an infantry squad competition on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, March 18, 2026. (U.S. Marine Corps Photos by Lance Cpl. Jaden Beardsley)

The expression means the plan vs execution under real world conditions.

I'll give an example of a common experience in any GCE unit and then explain how the expression applies.

The Operations Officer, Operations Chief, Gunner, Logistics Officer and a Company Commander walk into the boss's office. "Sir, we're here for the confirmation brief for Range X." The Commander, Sgt. Maj., and the group sit down at a conference table, and with coffee cups full, they begin the brief. The very first page of the brief includes an image of Range X with graphics depicting assembly areas, line of departure, limit or advance, lateral limits, etc. Every detail of the training event is scrutinized. "Our ammo will be staged here, Marines will conduct rehearsals here, Marines will move through the event like this, Positional Safety Officers are Lance Cpls. X, Y, and Z, who have this much experience, and upon completion of live fire, the shakedown will occur here and in this manner."

This brief will be conducted with such detail that following it, all present will be able to mentally map out every event during a Marine's training day, from the range safety brief to line out and shake down.

Sounds effective, correct? Statistics show that it is. So where is the hidden risk? Remember the expression "expected versus performed"? Here's where the book ends come in. The boss will look at the Logistics Officer at some point after the live-fire brief and ask, "How are we getting out there?"

The answer will sound eerily like, "Motor Transport will have trucks staged outside the armory at 6 a.m., we'll depart at 7 a.m., expect to arrive at the range at 8 a.m.

and we'll be on standby to pick the Marines up at the range at 9 p.m. to bring them back to the armory." That's it yet, statistically speaking, 33% of ground fatalities since FY20-FY25 are from tactical vehicles.

Using this data to inform our decisions, this shows the risks at the book ends.

The most dangerous events during which Marines are most likely to be hurt or killed occur during these periods, but may not receive the same level of detailed scrutiny as the live-fire portion.

The reason this occurs is the commander expects these professionals to apply the same level of scrutiny to their planning as they did to the training, but that's often not the case. Does this sound familiar?

The Company Gunnery Sgt. starts by reviewing the company roster to identify who has incidental driver licenses. Every platoon is then tasked with providing one incidental driver and an A-driver. Those drivers and A-drivers are told they need to be at the motor pool to check out their vehicles at 6 a.m., then told to get some sleep and not stay up all night playing video games.

At first glance, this seems appropriate. Marines understand the task and they have licenses to operate the vehicle. The hidden risk becomes apparent when we compare our Air Combat Element counterparts. Because

Did you know HQMC is looking at ways to standardize and professionalize A-driver training?

an aviator must fly an aircraft to and from a training event, the entire evolution is considered the event. Additionally, aviators are scrutinized over every detail of their previous experience before being allowed to fly an aircraft. When's the last time they flew? How many hours? Nighttime versus daytime? The risk of losing an aircraft or aviator is so ingrained in aviation culture every step is considered during risk planning.

If the GCE adopted a model more like the aviation model, it would eliminate the book ends surrounding GCE training events by including them as part of the event. Here are a few questions for GCE leaders and commanders to ask to build understanding of the risks in the book ends: "How long have the drivers had incidental licenses? How many hours has each driven in this type of terrain? How much experience does the A-driver have behind the wheel of this vehicle? Have the A-drivers had experience in this type of terrain? Where are the vehicles being staged for drop-off and pick-up? Does the staging or route include a hill, slope or cliff?"

Ultimately, the unit's planning and the commander's understanding of movements must be as in-depth as the live-fire training brief described above. Not only should the boss understand the movement plan, route and timeline, but they must also understand the experience and proficiency of the drivers, any equipment concerns and terrain considerations. Commanders must fully understand and embrace all risks they assume within the movement plan.

I'll leave you with a final recommendation. If a commander is expected to place themselves at the point of most friction, why do we ignore the book ends?

## SAFETY SPOTLIGHTS



Sgt. Eric Quattrochio  
Center for Naval Aviation Technical  
Training Unit New River  
Marine Corps Air Station New River  
Jacksonville, North Carolina

Sgt. Eric Quattrochio is recognized for his exceptional attention to detail and proactive approach to safety during the CH-53K Practical Job Trainer (PJT) offload.

He immediately noticed the drag struts were disconnected, indicating the aircraft's landing gear was secured only by safety pins and recognized the potential for catastrophic failure.

He swiftly took decisive action, directing Marines to establish a safety perimeter

around the PJT with ropes and warning signs, preventing any personnel from entering the area until the drag struts were reattached and thoroughly inspected.

His quick thinking and diligent response effectively mitigated a hazardous situation, potentially averting serious injury, loss of life and significant damage to the aircraft.

His commitment to safety and unwavering vigilance is truly commendable.

**Why does this magazine's rank abbreviations, dates, and time format differ from standard military usage? This magazine follows AP style, which is the standard for news writing. AP style of writing is also mandated by the Department of War (DOW) Visual Information Style Guide and (DoDI) 5040.02 for publicly released communication. To learn more about AP style, scan this QR code to read the DOW Style Guide:**

