

RIDER DOWN

MAY 2026

Every Ride Counts: Tracking Risk and Readiness

By Juan Aguilar

The naval enterprise recorded 32 motorcycle crashes in May, including two fatalities, occurring across the continental United States, Hawaii and Spain, with the highest concentrations reported in California (38%). The data continues to reflect a persistent trend: more than 68% of these crashes involved riders aged 29 and under, particularly those in grades E-5 and below. This highlights a critical at-risk demographic that requires sustained command emphasis on mentorship, training and engagement.

May's mishaps reflect recurring and largely preventable risk factors, including loss of control during turns, roadway hazards, inadequate braking techniques, group riding risks and multi-vehicle interactions. Several incidents involved riders who had completed the Basic Rider Course (BRC),

reinforcing the fact initial training alone does not equate to operational proficiency. Continued practice, mentorship and active risk management remain essential to safe riding.

Multiple riders sustained severe injuries, including fractures, traumatic brain injuries, collapsed lungs and internal trauma. The wide range of mishap scenarios highlights the continued need for disciplined riding practices, defensive riding awareness and command-level engagement in motorcycle safety programs.

Mishap Overview

In May, 32 motorcycle-related incidents were reported:

- Fatal crashes: 2
- Multi-vehicle collisions: 10
- Collision with an animal or object: 4
- Loss of control/ rollover: 16

At a Glance

USN

Rider fatalities this report: 2
Rider fatalities for FY 26: 12

USMC

Rider fatalities this report: 0
Rider fatalities for FY 26: 8

Totals this report

Non-fatal crashes: 30
Fatalities: 2

Key observations:

- Roadway hazard risks: Multiple riders lost control after encountering potholes, gravel, uneven surfaces or roadway medians.
- Group and tandem riding mishaps: Several crashes occurred during group or tandem rides, highlighting the added risks associated with peer pacing and divided attention.
- Loss of traction during turns: A significant number of mishaps involved riders losing control while negotiating curves, braking aggressively or maneuvering at low speeds.
- Multi-vehicle interaction hazards: Riders were struck, cut off or forced into evasive action by other motorists, reinforcing the constant threat posed by surrounding traffic.
- Training and compliance concerns: Some riders lacked required motorcycle documentation or had limited experience despite recent BRC completion.

In observance of Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month, USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) hosted a command group ride allowing experienced and new riders to drive together, improve rider education and promote safe riding habits. (Photo courtesy of USS Dwight D. Eisenhower Public Affairs)



Contributing factors, key takeaways for safe riding

(Editor's Note: By analyzing the mishap reports, we gain a more in-depth look at possible causes behind the mishaps, so we can find areas to work on to get real, get better. The following are the key points found and areas to focus on.)

1. Training Gaps and Skill Retention

Several mishaps demonstrated a gap between completing initial training and applying those skills in real-world riding conditions. Riders had trouble with cornering, braking, traction management and hazard response. Recent BRC completion did not prevent multiple loss-of-control mishaps, reinforcing the fact riding proficiency requires continual practice and experience.

2. Basic Maneuver Control Loss

The majority of incidents involved riders losing traction or control during turns, lane transitions or evasive braking. Many of these mishaps occurred at relatively low or moderate speeds, demonstrating that fundamental riding skills remain critical regardless of the riding environment.

3. Multi-Vehicle Interaction Risks

Several riders were forced into evasive maneuvers after other drivers entered their lane, turned into their path or struck the motorcycle directly. These incidents continue to reinforce the reality other motorists remain

one of the greatest hazards to motorcycle riders.

4. Environmental and Roadway Hazards
Loose gravel, potholes, roadway medians and uneven pavement contributed directly to several mishaps this month. Riders must continuously evaluate roadway conditions and adjust their speed and positioning accordingly.

5. Group Riding and Peer Influence
Multiple incidents occurred during unofficial group or tandem rides. Group riding can introduce additional pressures, including pacing beyond skill level, target fixation, reduced following distances and distractions caused by other riders.

This month's motorcycle mishaps highlight persistent and largely preventable risks within the riding population. While roadway conditions and other drivers contributed to several incidents, most mishaps involved controllable factors such as rider awareness, braking technique, cornering proficiency and decision-making.

The continued involvement of younger riders and frequent low-speed loss-of-control crashes reinforce the fact initial motorcycle training does not equal mastery. Skills degrade without continued practice, mentorship and advanced training.

Multi-vehicle environments require constant vigilance, as riders must assume they are not seen and continuously maintain proper lane positioning, situational awareness and escape routes. Roadway hazards such as gravel, potholes and uneven surfaces also remain a persistent threat, particularly during braking and turning maneuvers. Continuous skill development, disciplined riding practices, command engagement and strict compliance with motorcycle safety requirements remain essential to reducing future mishaps across the naval enterprise.

To prevent future "shake your head incidents," motorcycle safety representatives and leadership are encouraged to share the mishap incidents from the following pages with their riders.

By the numbers

- 10 (31%) crashes involved colliding with a moving vehicle.
- 9 (28%) crashes involved a rollover/overturn.
- 8 (25%) crashes had a rider who ran off the road.
- 4 (13%) crashes involved colliding with an animal or object.
- 1 (3%) crash data NR.

By the clock

- Midnight - 3:59 a.m. – 0
- 4 a.m.-7:59 a.m. – 7 (22%)
- 8 a.m. - 11:59 a.m. – 5 (16%)
- noon - 3:59 p.m. – 3 (9%)
- 4 p.m. - 7:59 p.m. – 8 (25%)
- 8 p.m. - 11:59 p.m. – 9 (28%)

By the day

- Weekdays – 17 (53%)
- Weekend – 15 (47%)



Rider Down

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

Information contained in the report is based on preliminary data and is provided for hazard

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

Crash data can be obtained from Naval Safety Command.



Motorcycle Crash Legend

NR represents information not reported
Red entries represent
Marine Corps-specific mishaps
(all times local)

Fatal Crashes

May 15, 5:57 a.m., 26-year-old O-2

Location: Dardanelle, California

Remarks: Rider was operating their motorcycle at an undetermined rate of speed, ran off the road, collided with a tree and was later discovered unresponsive at the crash site by a search party. The rider sustained fatal injuries.

May 31, time NR, 21-year-old E-3

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was involved in a motorcycle crash while returning to the San Diego area. The rider sustained fatal injuries.

Nonfatal Crashes

May 1, 6:30 p.m., 40-year-old CW02

Location: Chula Vista, California

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle when the bike began to slide during a right turn. To prevent a more serious crash, the rider extended their right leg to stabilize the motorcycle and sustained a right Achilles strain.

May 2, 2 p.m., 24-year-old E-5

Location: Fallbrook, California

Remarks: Rider struck a pothole while riding off base with friends. This caused the motorcycle's suspension to bottom out, making the bike unstable. The rider intentionally directed the motorcycle toward a dirt embankment to avoid a more severe crash, laying the bike down and sustaining minor scrapes and injuries.

May 3, 1:30 p.m., 21-year-old E-4

Location: Port Orchard, Washington

Remarks: Rider was participating in a mixed military and civilian group ride off base when control was lost on loose gravel, resulting in a low-side crash. A fellow rider transported the injured rider for medical evaluation, where the rider was assessed and released from the medical center.

May 4, 7 p.m., 21-year-old E-3

Location: Jacksonville, Florida

Remarks: Rider lost control of the motorcycle, causing it to slide. The rider sustained road rash on the left knee, hand and stomach.

May 5, 8 p.m., 42-year-old E-6

Location: Fallon, Nevada

Remarks: Passenger riding on a motorcycle was involved in a crash

after the operator misjudged a curve in the roadway. The passenger sustained left-side contusions and a neck strain.

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

Location: Maysville, North Carolina

Remarks: Rider lost control of a motorcycle after the rear wheel slipped, causing the motorcycle to enter a ditch. The rider sustained a mild concussion, bruising near the left knee and minor scrapes.

May 7, 4:30 p.m., 38-year-old E-7

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was traveling home on a motorcycle when a separate vehicle swerved into the rider's lane, forcing evasive action. The rider lost control, causing the motorcycle to slide out from underneath the rider, sustaining a right leg injury.

May 8, 9:05 p.m., 20-year-old E-3

Location: Fort Worth, Texas

Remarks: Rider was participating in a tandem ride with another motorcyclist when they reportedly lost control and struck a roadway median. The rider was found unresponsive at the scene and transported to hospital, where they were intubated and treated for collapsed lungs, brain bleeding and a traumatic brain injury.

May 9, 9:20 p.m., age NR E-4

Location: Jacksonville, North Carolina

Remarks: Rider was involved in a motorcycle crash and was transported to a medical center for treatment. The rider was intubated and required surgery for a fractured femur.

May 12, 8:30 p.m., age and rank NR

Location: Florida

Remarks: Rider operating a scooter struck a pothole and fell from the scooter.

May 13, 7:51 a.m., 29-year-old E-6

Location: Jessup, Maryland

Remarks: Rider was traveling on a roadway when an oncoming vehicle turned left into the rider's path. The rider attempted evasive braking and maneuvering but collided with the rear passenger side of the vehicle. Both the rider and the motorcycle slid across the roadway following impact.

Acronyms

***ARC:** Advanced Rider Course

***BRC:** Basic Rider Course

***LLD:** light limited duty

***PMV-2:** Motorcycle

***PMV-4:** Automobile

***SIQ:** sick in quarters

CRASH REPORTS

May 13, 8:50 p.m., 20-year-old E-3

Location: Bremerton, Washington

Remarks: Rider lost traction while operating a motorcycle and fell from the bike, sustaining a broken index finger.

May 14, 7:30 a.m., age NR E-3

Location: New Orleans, Louisiana

Remarks: Rider operating a motorcycle while commuting to work when they were struck by a PMV-4. The rider sustained fractures to the right femur and upper left arm, which required surgery.

May 14, 9 p.m., age NR E-3

Location: Oxnard, California

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle when a separate vehicle sideswiped the bike and fled the scene. The rider sustained multiple injuries, including road rash, a contusion and an ankle injury.

May 15, 2:30 p.m., 29-year-old E-6

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was cut off by another rider merging onto an interstate, resulting in a crash. The rider sustained a fractured ulna requiring hospitalization and surgery.

May 15, 10 p.m., 24-year-old E-5

Location: Virginia Beach, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was involved in a non-collision motorcycle mishap while exiting a highway. While attempting evasive action to avoid a potential rear-end collision, the rider applied hard braking, lost traction and slid at low speed.

May 16, 4:50 p.m., age and rank NR

Location: Monks Corner, South Carolina

Remarks: Rider was involved in a collision while attempting to pass another vehicle. The rider sustained severe injuries which required hospitalization.

May 18, 7:30 a.m., 28-year-old E-5

Location: Jacksonville, Florida

Remarks: Rider was involved in a collision between a motorcycle and another motor vehicle and was transported by ambulance to a hospital for evaluation. The rider was a recent check-in to the command and they had not yet submitted required motorcycle documentation or enrolled in the command motorcycle safety program.

May 18, 7 p.m., 19-year-old E-4

Location: Schenectady, New York

Remarks: Rider was making a right-hand turn onto a residential street when the rider overshot the turn and lost control. The motorcycle slid into a grassy shoulder and impacted concrete, resulting in injuries. The rider completed the BRC in April 2026.

May 19, 6:50 a.m., 22-year-old E-4

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle when a vehicle changed lanes without signaling while the rider was lane splitting. The rider applied the brakes and attempted an evasive maneuver but lost control and was ejected onto the roadway. The rider was transported to a medical facility, where they were diagnosed with a right shoulder dislocation. The rider was placed on one day SIQ and 14 days LLD.

May 20, 10 a.m., 19-year-old E-3

Location: Jacksonville, Florida

Remarks: Rider was involved in a motorcycle crash and sustained injuries requiring medical evaluation and treatment. They were placed on 30 days of light duty.

May 20, 8:24 p.m., age and rank NR

Location: NR

Remarks: Rider was involved in a single-vehicle motorcycle crash on a local interstate. The rider sustained bruising and road rash and was treated and released from the emergency room.

May 21, 4:30 p.m., 32-year-old O-3

Location: Vantage, Washington

Remarks: Rider was traveling on a motorcycle through a highway construction zone when the motorcycle struck an unmarked roadway divot caused by paving operations. The impact ejected the rider approximately 20 feet from the motorcycle. The rider sustained minor cuts, abrasions and bruising.

May 23, 8:30 a.m., 2-year-old E-3

Location: San Diego, California

Remarks: Rider was involved in a collision with a semi-truck near a naval installation. The rider was transported to hospital for evaluation and admitted overnight with cuts and bruises. The rider completed the BRC in June 2025 with no other follow-on training.

May 23, 10:30 a.m., 35-year-old E-8

Location: Murrietta, California

Remarks: Rider lost control of a motorcycle after encountering an uneven section of roadway while returning home. The rider and motorcycle slid along the roadway, resulting in road rash injuries. The rider later received medical evaluation and was placed on 14 days LLD.

May 27, 6:30 p.m., 21-year-old E-4

Location: Honolulu, Hawaii

Remarks: Rider was involved in a single-vehicle motorcycle crash and later went to a medical facility for evaluation. The rider was treated, discharged and placed on SIQ for three days. The rider had recently completed the ARC May 15, 2026.



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CRASH REPORTS

May 27, 9 p.m., age NR E-8

Location: Chipiona, Spain

Remarks: Rider was operating a scooter after retrieving it from maintenance when a vehicle ahead braked suddenly near a roundabout. The rider applied both brakes and swerved to avoid a rear-end collision but instead collided with an oncoming vehicle.

May 28, 5 p.m., 20-year-old E-2

Location: California

Remarks: Rider lost control of a motorcycle while negotiating a highway transition-ramp curve at excessive speed, and collided with a concrete barrier. The rider sustained road rash and severe abrasions to the hand.

May 29, 6:30 a.m., 34-year-old E-6

Location: Norfolk, Virginia

Remarks: Rider was operating a motorcycle when a vehicle ahead braked abruptly, resulting in a rear-end collision. The rider sustained a fractured wrist and a bruised hip, and was transported to hospital for

evaluation before being released. A traffic citation was issued to the rider for following too closely.

May 29, 8:20 a.m., 20-year-old E-2

Location: Oceanside, California

Remarks: Rider operating a motorcycle ran off the roadway and crashed. The rider sustained an injury to their leg and head during the incident.

Although the following is not an off-duty reportable PMV-2 event, it is highly valuable to reference for training purposes.

May 15, 6:20 p.m., 23-year-old E-2

(Reservist not on official duty fatality)

Location: San Benito, Texas

Remarks: Rider operating a motorcycle was involved in a collision with a pickup truck towing a trailer in a rural area. The rider sustained severe injuries and was transported to a medical center, where the rider later succumbed to those injuries.

USN AND USMC MOTORCYCLE CRASHES FY 2026 TO DATE



As of 31 May 2026

