

# FY19 FATALITIES

as of 13 December 2018

Aviation

6

Ground On-Duty

0

Car

1

Motorcycle

3

Other

2

TOTAL

12

Numbers in fatality categories are subject to change based on final disposition of investigation.

www.safety.marines.mil

Vol. 19 - Ed. 2



# COMBATTING THE BLUE THREAT

COMMANDANT'S SAFETY ACTION CAMPAIGN

## Taking the Pulse of the Marine Corps

From the Director...

Marines, as described in Warfighting MCDP 1, "war is a human enterprise and no amount of technology can reduce the human dimension." Likewise, our philosophy of command must be based on human characteristics. This philosophy not only accommodates but exploits human traits such as boldness, initiative, personality, strength of will, and imagination, and it must also exploit the human ability to communicate implicitly — to communicate through mutual understanding.

Morale, productivity, and commitment are affected by how well and frequently information flows between higher, subordinate, and adjacent formations. There is no skill more fundamental to successful relationships than the ability to effectively convey our thoughts, ideas, and feelings and to understand the communication received from others. This communication must be able to flow both up and down the chain of command. You need

to trust in your command and know they will make the changes required to successfully employ the unit. Be bold in your recommendations and think out of the box; your ideas can make a difference.

Surveys are an essential and effective tool needed to enable open lines of communication. Gathering your feedback aids commanders in the resolution of issues and promotes process and organization improvements. More simply, surveys allow leaders to "keep their fingers on the pulse" of their units. Most importantly, this type of open and honest feedback gives commanders the ability to **ACT** on your areas of concern. It is imperative that the communication loop complete a full circle, from message sent and received to action taken. Keep the press on, Marines; *you* are making the difference!



### Combating the Blue Threat:

Marines, help us to help you! We take safety seriously and your feedback helps us target the areas of greatest vulnerability. You are on the front lines and in the trenches and see first-hand where we may be falling short in keeping Marines safe. Submitting observations focuses our attention where it's needed so we can protect our Corps and ready our units.

#### Communication is a fundamental requirement for accomplishing tasks within Marine units.

Incorrect, inadequate, delayed, or absent communications can negatively affect task outcomes. Senior Marines (officer and enlisted) are expected to be good communicators. The more senior, the higher the level of expectation. This premise incorrectly presumes that time or advancement in rank somehow improves an individual's communication skills. Seniority often creates opportunities for more communication, but doesn't guarantee better communication skills.

#### COMMUNICATION SURVEY ITEMS:

1. Effective communication exists within my headquarters.
2. Effective communication flow exists with external commands.
3. I get all the information I need to do my job safely.
4. Within my unit, there is good communication up and down the chain of command.
5. Unit leaders listen carefully to Marines of all ranks.

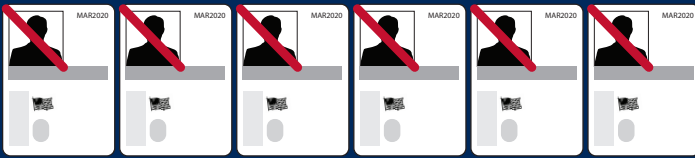
**DID YOU KNOW?** All 13 FY18 motorcycle fatalities were 20-24 year old Marines. 1

# FY19 CLASS A MISHAPS

## AVIATION

**2 CLASS A AVIATION MISHAPS** resulted in the death of six Marines.

- 5 December 2018: Class A, Philippine Sea; F/A-18D and KC-130J collided while performing fixed wing aerial refueling mission. F/A-18 aircrew ejected with one fatality. Crew of five in the KC-130 were all fatalities.
- 9 December 2018: Class A, MCAS New River, NC; CH-53E landing gear inadvertently retracted during ground taxi.



## GROUND ON-DUTY

**1 CLASS A GROUND MISHAP** resulted in the permanent, total disability of one Marine.

- 6 November 2018: Class A, Coolidge, AZ; E-4 suffered a permanent total disability during a training course.



## OFF-DUTY

**1 CLASS A CAR MISHAP** resulted in the death of one Marine.

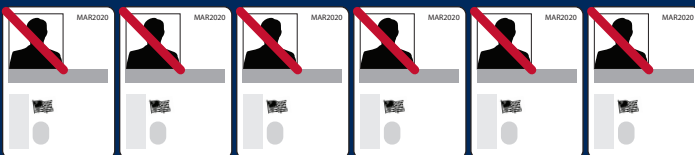
- 12 October 2018: PMV-4, Snyder, TX; E-1 drifted onto the shoulder of a highway, overcorrected, and collided head-on with a tractor-trailer.

**3 CLASS A MOTORCYCLE MISHAPS** resulted in the death of three Marines.

- 19 October 2018: PMV-2, Richland, NC; E-3 died in a motorcycle mishap on his way to work.
- 16 November 2018: PMV-2, Temecula, CA; E-5 motorcyclist died when he collided with another vehicle.
- 18 November 2018: PMV-2, Julian, CA; E-4 died on 22 Nov from injuries sustained in a single-vehicle motorcycle mishap.

**2 CLASS A OTHER MISHAPS** resulted in the death of two Marines.

- 20 October 2018: Recreational, Havelock, NC; E-3 died when hi weapon accidentally discharged while he was cleaning it.
- 18 November 2018: Pedestrian, Philadelphia, PA; E-8 died when he was hit by a vehicle while crossing the street.



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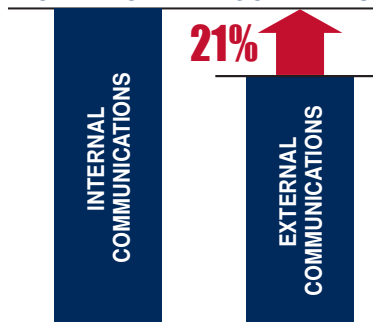
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## Communication

One notable insight from survey results is the difference in non-favorable comments between internal and external communication. Specifically, **non-favorable internal communication comments exceeded non-favorable external communication comments by 21%**. One possible explanation for the relatively large difference is that respondents likely have greater awareness of poor internal communications than poor external communications. For instance, unit members articulated first-hand accounts of poor communication within their unit, such as commanders not conveying priorities. On the other hand, communication processes external to the unit may be unknown or assumed to work well absent first-hand experience.

### NON-FAVORABLE COMMENTS



### FAVORABLE THEME: FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION



Photo from TV Land

**The single common favorable theme for both internal and external communication involved the application of face-to-face communication when practical.** In particular, leaders/supervisors who engaged in face-to-face communication established an effective dialogue and rapport between themselves and their unit members.

Face-to-face communication is not only beneficial to senior-subordinate relationships, but within peer communication channels as well. Although it requires time and effort, face-to-face communication facilitates holistic communication goals such as building trust and relationships that cannot be achieved simply by electronic means, enabling immediate feedback from the receiver of the message.

**The predominant themes from non-favorable comments for both internal and external communication involved last minute notifications and excessive reliance on electronic means of communication** (e.g., email, texting, Skype, etc.).

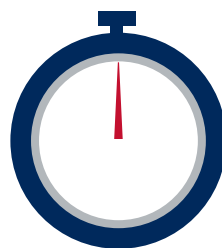
Receiving information last minute creates significant challenges for subordinates, to include insufficient planning time, inadequate training support, and general frustration. These conditions may lead to situations ranging from missed training events to unsafe environments. Furthermore, repeated last-minute information flow can degrade a unit's trust and confidence in its higher headquarters.

Reliance on email to pass critical information poses multiple problems. First, unit members may not always have access to email when information is passed resulting in information gaps. Email also enables the sender to easily jump chains of commands, leading to disconnects in information flow. Additionally, email is based on the potentially faulty premises that the intended recipient received, read, understood, and acted upon the email. Finally, email often lacks the critical feedback component in the communication process.

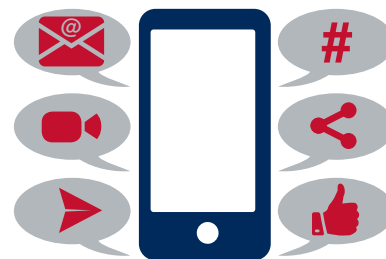
Implementing a combination of face-to-face and electronic means of communication and ensuring leaders communicate their priorities (note: not everything can be first priority) are steps that we can take to strengthen communications across the chain of command.

### NON-FAVORABLE THEMES:

#### LAST-MINUTE NOTIFICATIONS



#### EXCESSIVE RELIANCE ON ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION



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## Communication (cont'd)

### FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. When feasible, do you conduct face-to-face communication and convey priorities?
2. Does your unit implement a communication plan that includes leader engagement and appropriate communication processes?
3. Does your unit pass critical information to subordinate units in timely manner?
4. Does your unit rely too heavily on automated tools for communication flow?

## Online Safety/Leadership Surveys

### Online safety/leadership surveys assist COs with assessing their organization's command climate.

Commanders are required to review various surveys when they assume command, including The Command Culture Survey (CCS) and Safety Climate Surveys (GCASS and MCASS), which are service-required, and DOD requires the Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (DEOCS). These anonymous and confidential surveys support organizational development and help build a strong unit culture.

<i>Flying Units – Within 30 days of command and annually thereafter</i>	<i>Ground Units – Within 30 days of a change of command and annually thereafter</i>	<i>Service requirement (sponsored by CMC(SD))</i>	<i>All Units – Within 90 days of a change of command and at least annually thereafter</i>	<i>Commandant of the Marine Corps (Sponsored by CMC(SD))</i>	<i>All Units – Within 30 days of a change of command and annually thereafter</i>	<i>All Units – Within 90 days of relinquishing command</i>	<i>Department of Defense (DoD requirement)</i>
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	GCASS (Ground Climate Assessment Survey System)	GCA – Ground Climate Assessment Survey							
SAFETY CLIMATE SURVEYS		CSA – Command Safety Assessment (aircrew)	•		•				
	MCASS (Marine Corps Aviation Survey System)	MCAS – Maintenance Climate Assessment Survey (maintainers)	•		•				
		ASPA – Administrative Support Personnel Assessment Survey (non-aircrew / non-maintainers)	•		•				
	COMMAND CLIMATE SURVEY	CCS (Command Climate Survey)				•	•		
ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE SURVEY	DEOCS (Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey) (For units with 50 or fewer Marines, survey with a larger unit to ensure anonymity.)						•	•	•

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## GCASS and MCASS

GCASS and MCASS offer safety climate surveys that help us steer the Corps towards a safer, more secure environment. Candid and constructive feedback gives us actionable intelligence about where Blue Threats exist and provides input for our decisions. Our analysts do a deep dive into the issues that threaten our safety and readiness.

Restricted access is available for review of Issue papers on the various topics that arise from these surveys. Access can be requested by sending an email to [surveys@AdvancedSurveyDesign.com](mailto:surveys@AdvancedSurveyDesign.com). Several of these issue papers address the topic of communication and provide recommendations for enhancing internal and external communication.

The graphic features the U.S. Marine Corps logo and the text "U.S. Marine Corps Ground Climate Assessment Survey System (GCASS)". It includes a navigation menu on the left with 14 items: 1 - TAKE A SURVEY, 2 - SURVEY INFORMATION, 3 - SAMPLE SURVEYS, 4 - SET-UP UNIT SURVEYS, 5 - SAMPLE RESULTS, 6 - VIEW RESULTS, 7 - SURVEY ADMIN, 8 - INTERVENTIONS, 9 - ISSUE PAPERS, 10 - SUGGESTIONS, 11 - HELP / FAQ, 12 - LINKS, 13 - CONTACT US, 14 - HOME. The main content area contains several images with captions: "DRINKING & DRIVING" (two men), "OFF-DUTY & RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES" (a woman at a marathon), "PRIVATE MOTOR VEHICLES" (a car), "HIGHER HQ" (an American flag), "MOTORCYCLES" (a person on a motorcycle), "GROUND CLIMATE ASSESSMENT" (a person in a field), "SUPPORT PERSONNEL" (a person at a computer), and "AVIATION COMMANDS ONLY" (a person at a computer). A link is provided: "Who should take the GCASS surveys? [CLICK HERE FOR INFO]".

GCASS surveys collect Marines' perceptions of their unit's ability to safely conduct operations. In addition to the general survey, the following optional surveys are available:

- Private Motor Vehicle (PMV) survey
- Motorcycle (MTRCYCL) survey
- Drinking & Driving (D&D) survey
- Off Duty & Recreational Activity (OD&R) survey
- Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) survey

The GCASS survey system is available 24/7 at <https://www.semperisurveys.org>.

### By design...

- Survey responses are anonymous. That is, survey responses are separated from the demographic data before the commanding officer is provided access to the data. Thus, respondents cannot be identified unless they self-identify.
- Individual battalion/squadron-level survey results are not provided to higher headquarters. Higher headquarters can only view aggregate units' survey data.

**These safeguards are in place in order to ensure survey respondents can provide candid feedback without fear of retribution.**

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# Marine and Family Programs Update

## ***Myth Busting: Death by Suicide is Linked to the Holidays***

This is a myth. Marines must be vigilant and support one another throughout the entire year.

According to the 2016 Status of Forces Survey, one in six Marines indicated that they had a suicidal thought in their lifetime. Intervention at the time of the suicidal thought, before thoughts escalate to physical actions, is key.

**With this knowledge, keep 3 Rs in mind:**

### READINESS



The majority of Marines who died by suicide did not tell anyone about their thoughts or seek help prior to their death. Know your Marine and don't be afraid to ask, "Are you thinking about killing yourself?" and know what to do when the answer is yes.

### REHABILITATION



Intervening and being there for your Marine is critical to our fight to eliminate deaths by suicide. Escort the Marine to get help.

### RETENTION



A "zero defect" mentality discourages Marines from getting help when they have these thoughts. When Marines get the help they need and are supported by their command, they learn to cope and become more resilient.

When you use the **3 Rs** and support your Marines during and after care, you are improving readiness and retention. We can and should retain Marines who may be experiencing momentary distress, but are highly capable of performing their duties.

We have all led and are leading Marines with ideations. You may have had ideations yourself. Engaged leadership with your Marines, and knowing that someone who cares is accessible, goes a long way in preventing ideations from becoming a suicide attempt or death by suicide.

***One Marine death by suicide is one death too many!***