

FY19 FATALITIES

Aviation

0

Ground On-Duty

0

Car

0

Motorcycle

0

Other

0

TOTAL

0

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

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COMBATTING THE BLUE THREAT

COMMANDANT'S SAFETY ACTION CAMPAIGN

Negligent Discharge: When You Least Expect It

From the Director...

Every Marine has at least one or two stories about a negligent discharge (ND). Maybe you know one that happened on base. Or maybe it happened off-duty. I have personally witnessed or investigated NDs on the snap in-range, at the shooting range, clearing barrels in OIF, loading a .50 cal on a convoy abroad, and even air delivered ordnance from aircraft inflight.

You have all been trained as basic riflemen in the Corps, yet NDs keep happening. They're not only causing injury, but loss of life. Losing a Marine, a family member, or a friend to mishandled weapons is unacceptable. Every negligent discharge, by definition, is avoidable. Every weapon is different; know and admit your limitations. Learn from and avoid the mistakes others have made when neglecting to follow the basic tenets of weapon and personal firearm safety.

Combatting the Blue Threat:

The Blue Threat refers to conditions, actions, and inactions that result in unnecessary risk and often result in mishaps. NDs are a perfect example of a "Blue Threat" to our mission. Although firearms are inherently dangerous and can pose significant risks, following the four Weapon Safety Rules each and every time you handle a firearm will prevent and ultimately manage those risks.

Negligent Discharge of Firearms

The Marine Corps is no stranger to firearm mishaps related to NDs. From 2013 to 2018, there have been 36 on-duty and 18 off-duty negligent discharges reported. All have a common theme: failure to follow the four Weapon Safety Rules.



WEAPON SAFETY RULES

The four Weapon Safety Rules indicated below are typically taught at bootcamp, but they shouldn't be left there. They should be observed every single time you handle a firearm.

- 1** Treat every weapon as if it were loaded.
- 2** Never point a weapon at anything you don't intend to shoot.
- 3** Keep finger straight and off the trigger until you're ready to fire.
- 4** Keep safety on until you intend to fire.

These rules provide clear guidelines for the safe handling of firearms to prevent needless injuries or fatalities. In reported incidents, common trends include lack of weapon familiarity and failure to properly clear the firearm. The majority of on-duty mishaps occur during basic training, weapon cleaning, or disassembly. Most off-duty mishaps occur when loaded firearms are misidentified as unloaded ones (normally when a round has been left in the chamber). Remember, treat each weapon as though it were loaded while handling it, and if you're not familiar with a certain type of firearm, best to decline handling it at all.

DID YOU KNOW? From FY16 to date, Marines have lost more than 1,700 days of work and millions of dollars due to NDs.

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Weapon Safety Rules

1 Treat every weapon as if it were loaded.

A recently "unloaded" weapon



A weapon being brought home from the range



A weapon stored in a bag



A weapon handed from one person to another



A weapon that has already been dismantled

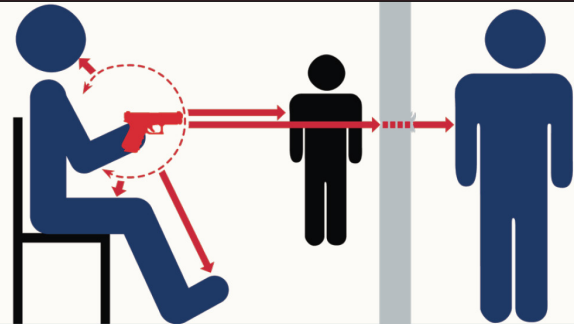


A weapon that has had the magazine removed and the chamber cleared



**ALL WEAPONS.
ALL THE TIME.**

2 Never point a weapon at anything you don't intend to shoot.



The muzzle of the gun should never be aimed in the direction of something you don't intend to shoot.

3 Keep finger straight and off the trigger until you're ready to fire.



The best way to prevent negligent discharge is to keep your trigger finger indexed along the frame of the firearm until your sights are on the target. Do not place your finger inside the trigger guard until you're ready to pull the trigger.

4 Keep safety on until you intend to fire.



This rule enforces the use of safety features and reinforces positive identification of your target.

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Stories from Your Fellow Marines...

With 54 negligent discharges reported in the Marine Corps between 2013 and 2018, there are plenty of examples of these types of incidents. The following involve your fellow Marines, and I challenge you to read their stories and consider the weight of their consequences.

SMALL ARMS NEGLIGENT DISCHARGE

2013 - 2018

 Fatality

 Injury

ON DUTY



OFF DUTY



Source: Naval Safety Center

On-duty

- 1) After completing a three-day Combat Logistics Patrol, four Marines returned to the FOB at 0100. Prior to entering, they reported following established unloading and clearing procedures, including a further pat down and visual inspection by an NCO. The following day, the Marines ate breakfast, lunch, and dinner at the chow hall — each visit requiring the Marines to clear and show their weapons as safe prior to entry. After playing cards in billeting, a LCpl asked another Marine to hand him his M16A4 service rifle. During the physical transfer, the rifle “inadvertently discharged.” **The bullet struck a Cpl in the head, killing him instantly.**
- 2) During on-duty training at a range, **two Marines suffered significant injuries as a result of a negligent discharge.** One of the Marines unintentionally pulled the trigger of his firearm while maneuvering towards the objective. His injuries included shrapnel wounds in his left elbow and left leg due to the bullet’s ricochet. His fellow Marine sustained a gunshot wound through his lower right leg and into his left leg, resulting in his right leg being amputated below the knee.

F_{ailed}

1

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F_{ailed}

2

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Naval Safety Center’s Lessons Learned has a great edition involving negligent discharges from June 2018. Read it here: <https://intelshare.intelink.gov/sites/navsafe>. [Lessons Learned archive is CAC-enabled]

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Off-duty

3) While working on a personal vehicle at an off-base residence, two Marines decided to “test” a new pistol holster that one of them had recently purchased. One of the Marines recalled clearing his weapon after putting on his holster. In a later report, he stated that he recalled “ejecting the magazine and racking the slide to the rear, which should have cleared the chamber” before putting it back in the holster. He stood five to seven feet away from his fellow Marine and performed a “quick draw” of the weapon. In doing so, his index finger missed the trigger guard and instead squeezed the trigger. **The “empty” pistol discharged, causing a round to strike his friend in the abdomen.** Records indicate that alcohol was a contributing factor.

Alcohol and firearms are two things that many Marines enjoy, but the two should never be mixed.



4) A Marine improperly stored his firearm at another Marine’s off-base residence. A 3rd Marine who visited the residence picked the weapon up from the table where it was placed to inspect it and because the weapon wasn’t properly cleared, it discharged. The discharged round hit the homeowner in the foot, which required medical attention, resulting in the amputation of his toe.

- Failed 1** Treat every weapon as if it were loaded.
- Failed 2** Never point a weapon at anything you don’t intend to shoot.
- Failed 3** Keep finger straight and off the trigger until you’re ready to fire.
- Failed 4** Keep safety on until you intend to fire.

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FY16 to Date Impacts to Workforce by Days

MISHAP OCCURED	TOTAL LOST TIME	TOTAL LIMITED/ LIGHT DUTY	TOTAL HOSPITAL TIME
Off-Duty	542	1,275	256
On-Duty	62	126	55

Source: Naval Safety Center

The numbers above account for over 1,700 days where off-duty negligent discharge mishaps have had an effect on readiness across the Marine Corps. In comparison, on-duty negligent discharge mishaps total less than 200 days effected. In FY17, there were 16 off-duty ND mishaps recorded, compared to only three on-duty ND mishaps that resulted in injury. While the numbers for FY18 are slightly more balanced — with five on-duty, and five off-duty — the severity of the off-duty mishaps were greater.

We heavily promote safety and weapons handling on duty. Weapon handling is deeply instilled in our training and continually reinforced on the range, and this on-duty safety culture must carry over to off-duty activities. Off-duty mishaps from NDs are like camouflaged adversaries that somehow sneak past our perimeter and bypass our own weapons training. In reality, we are the adversary. Failure to adhere to the four Weapon Safety Rules while off-duty is putting Marines in the hospital or killing them, ultimately affecting unit readiness. Consider what 2,000 days in a less-than-full-duty status can do to impact a maintenance shop on a flight line or a battalion landing team preparing to float with the MEU.

It doesn’t matter where you are, what you are doing, or who you are with — if you are going to handle a firearm, exercise the caution and safety the situation deserves. Now consider how many close calls or near misses can occur before an actual mishap. Those close calls have the potential for catastrophic injury or death.

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Accidental Discharge



While conducting aircraft maintenance during a Weapons and Tactics Instructor (WTI) course, an unrealized abnormal condition involving live ordnance created a potentially deadly situation.

A maintenance team assembled for a routine ordnance loading event of an AV-8B 25 millimeter GAU-12 rotary cannon. After having loaded several dozen rounds of the 25mm ammunition into the gun, the weapon inadvertently fired.

The failure was mechanical, but the accidental discharge was avoidable. Every cocking pin in the gun had been sheared off, which is what allowed the firing pin to strike the primers of the rounds as they were being loaded. Maintenance personnel had failed to follow the proper maintenance steps — specifically those involved with inspecting the cocking pins — prior to loading.

While this oversight could have resulted in serious damage or injury, the nose of the aircraft was pointed in a designated direction before the loading evolution began (per the proper maintenance and standard operating procedures). This precludes any damage if there happens to be an accidental discharge, and as a result, the large projectile harmlessly impacted the earth in front of the aircraft.

Repeating tasks time and again without incident can sometimes lead Marines to grow complacent and gloss over certain steps when executing their duties. Even though these day-to-day tasks might seem routine, some have severe and often lethal consequences if not performed correctly and completely. Weapon safety rules, SOPs, and checklists are instituted to bring you to the safe and successful completion of a task, and we must adhere to them no matter how simple or complex the operation. Our equipment and machines can and will fail, often when we don't anticipate it, and we as Marines must exercise due diligence in the safety processes of every mission.

The weapon system failed; however, because the Marines followed the TTPs and SOPs there were no injuries from the accidental discharge.

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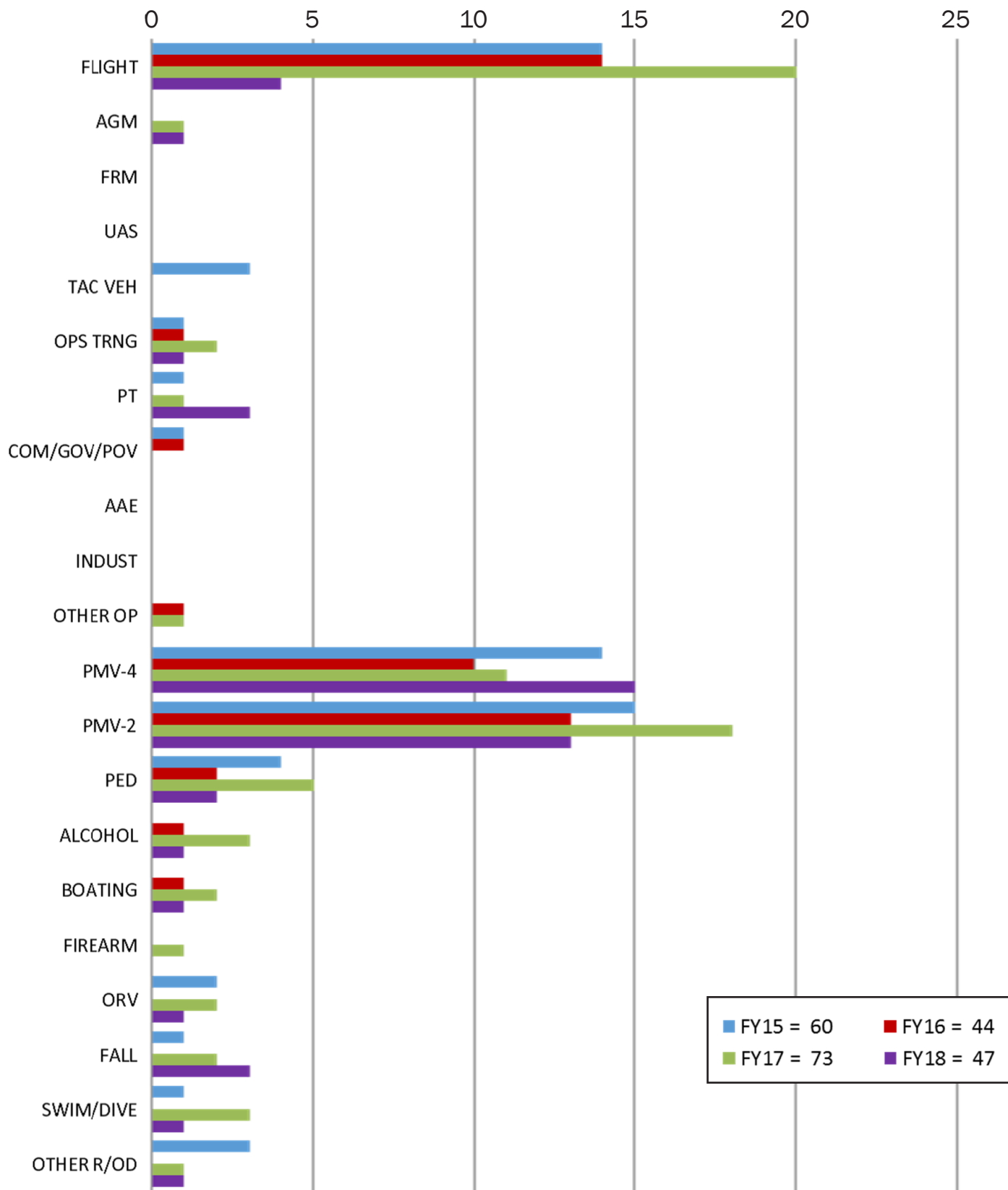
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FY15 - 18 Fatalities by Mishaps



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