



About This Department...

"Binnacle List" is an old Navy term that refers to a list of people excused from duty because of sickness. As used here, though, it refers to a collection of brief items about injured Sailors and Marines. The source of this information is the message traffic I read daily.—Ed.

Brunswick, Me.—“Practice ORM.” That’s the advice a PO1 received after he fell on ice and broke his ankle while trying to push his car out of a snowbank. He had left work to pick up his spouse when the car became stuck. His haste and frustration to free the car netted him a trip to base medical and then to a local hospital for treatment.

Mobile, Ala.—“And a good time was had by all” until a scuffle broke out among several people. The problem started during a gathering at a crew member’s house. When a Coast Guard PO1 tried to break up the scuffle, one of the participants threw him back, and he landed on his left hand.

Shipmates took him to a local hospital, where doctors admitted him for surgery. They had to repair his broken wrist with pins. He was released after two days but spent six weeks on limited duty.

No one called the police until after this incident started getting out of hand. If someone had called sooner, the outcome probably would have been different.

San Diego, Calif.—Here’s a tale that sounds like a scene from a movie script. A fireman was southbound on a freeway at an unknown speed when the road suddenly curved to the left. The tires lost traction, which caused the car to slide across the shoulder and go partly up an uneven embankment on the west side of the freeway. Still pointing south, the car hit a tree on the embankment and went airborne. It then banged into the embankment and started overturning.

After rolling several times, the car came to rest on its roof. The driver then was ejected in a southerly direction, and he landed on the shoulder of the freeway.

The driver said his wild ride started when another driver swerved and forced him off the road. However, he wasn’t able to provide any identifying information about the driver or vehicle, and no witnesses could support his claim.

The major cause of this mishap was an unsafe speed for the roadway conditions, but the police didn’t cite him for this violation. His command, though, briefed him on the use of ORM and the importance of observing road conditions and driving defensively. He also was scheduled to attend the Navy’s safe-driving course—once his injuries healed. He suffered a broken leg and hip, a hematoma to his forehead, and multiple abrasions, which resulted in a hospital stay and 60 lost workdays. He also may have permanent partial disability.

Whistler, B.C., Canada—After a half-day of snowboarding instruction on a beginner's slope, a PO3 spent the rest of the day practicing on the same slope. He felt confident enough the next morning to try an intermediate slope and successfully completed two downhill runs.

In this case, however, the third time wasn't a "charm." The PO3 fell on his third run and had to be taken to a local hospital. X-rays showed he had broken his collarbone. He lost only two workdays but spent 31 days on limited duty.

Jacksonville, Fla.—On duty or off, a little situational awareness goes a long way. That's the lesson an airman learned as he was returning to his car from a local grocery store.

He stepped in a pothole in the parking lot, broke his ankle, and spent the next seven days on convalescent leave. He had to keep his foot elevated for five days and will stay on limited duty until the ankle heals. What's the good news? Doctors do not expect any disability.

Boston, Mass.—A Coast Guard PO2 was on liberty by himself when he stumbled and fell on some broken glass and cut his left forearm. The problem was he didn't notice the roadway changed from flat asphalt to cobblestone.

The PO2 walked to the emergency room of a local hospital, where he received eight stitches. The next day, he was counseled for delaying his report of injury to the command. He also heard about the need to maintain situational awareness at all times.

Key West, Fla.—Being a good Samaritan can have its drawbacks. A Coast Guard PO2 was helping a shipmate into a taxi when he stepped off the curb and sprained his ankle. The taxi driver took him to his unit, where a corpsman treated the injury and sent the victim to a

local emergency room. Doctors there bandaged the ankle and put him on crutches. He then flew to a base clinic for a follow-up exam that resulted in 30 days of light duty.

Grand Bay, Ala.—Maybe we should change the message to, "Drink and Drive," because Sailors and Marines seem to be hellbent on doing the opposite of what they're told. For example, consider the four Sailors who had spent their liberty hours visiting several drinking establishments in a nearby city, then started back to their command in a pickup truck.

It was about 0400 when the four climbed into the truck for the return trip. Two passengers fell asleep in the bed of the pickup, and the third one went to sleep in the cab. A half hour into the trip, the driver fell asleep at the wheel, allowing the pickup to veer into a ditch. The two Sailors in the bed were ejected as the driver tried to regain control of the truck.

Emergency-medical technicians in a passing ambulance stopped to help and notified the state patrol. One of the two ejected passengers from the bed and the one in the cab were taken to a nearby hospital. Doctors diagnosed the ejected passenger with a cracked vertebra and admitted him for treatment. Five days later, he left the hospital and started 25 days of convalescent leave. Emergency-room staffers diagnosed the passenger from the cab with minor chest bruises. They treated and released him. No other injuries were reported.

When a state trooper arrived on the scene, he administered a breathalyzer test on the driver, which indicated a BAC of .14. He issued a citation for driving under the influence and took the driver into custody.

Both the driver and one of the passengers (a 19-year-old) received non-judicial punishment. All four were screened for alcohol abuse, and the command held divisional training.