

# Scratching Post



**Season of Change**



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## Season of Change

CDR Virgle Reeves

VT-10 Commanding Officer



I have truly enjoyed my time in the past year as your Executive Officer. We have accomplished many goals together as Team Wildcat, but my main source of pride is you. I could not be more pleased or prepared to walk the passage ways and see so many dedicated students and staff ready for any challenge.

As I write this, the squadron has recently experienced a round of change, including a complete job shift with the new 1301 and the recent “changing of the guard” in the front office. Usually, following tradition, I have written recommending ways to guide students as you progress through your training; but in this case, I would rather use this opportunity to encourage a path of greater communication.

I want to learn from you what is working in our unit and what needs to be reworked. I have several capabilities within my reach at present, but I value each of you as the best source of feedback and communication on how the squadron is succeeding. Students, instructors, and our dedicated civilian support staff are the best sources to clearly define and target the command’s capabilities.

So when you have concerns accompanied with recommendations that you find as potential potholes in our road to success, bring them to the attention of the command, via critiques, briefs, AOM’s or your Class Advisor just to name a few. You are our most valuable resource and what you have to say makes a difference. Remember to be alert, focused and prepared during your training so you get the most from this experience and always keep safety as the top priority.

Skipper Reeves

CDR Reeves proudly took command of VT-10 in December 2011 during a ceremony at the Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, FL

## A Message from the Safety Office

The fall leaves and daylight savings are not the only things changing around the squadron has recently undergone a 1301 job shuffle in November, a Change of Command in December, and is preparing for the new year to come. We have changed the color of t-shirts worn under our flight suits and have even changed a few FTIs. However, there is one thing that has not changed in the squadron and that is the outstanding safety record. We continue to provide safe, quality flight training to NFOs.

Recently, the squadron was observed by the Naval Safety Center for a Command Cultural workshop. The results were **OUTSTANDING!** In particular, the squadron excelled in the areas of communication, trust, and integrity. The success of a squadron's safety culture is not measured by a few individuals over a short period of time. It is the result of an entire unit embracing a safe culture built on years of hard work. Congratulations to each of you for your contributions in making VT-10 both safe and operationally excellent!

With the upcoming winter months approaching, be sure to plan ahead. "Dress to Egress" by putting on an extra layer of clothing before you go flying. Be a professional and review cold weather operating procedures and know your limits. Winterize your vehicles and utilize sound ORM principles before departing on a long road trip to Grandma's house in Virginia. The holidays can be a stressful time for some; be cognizant of others who may show signs of depression or suicide. Most of all, enjoy the holiday season with your families and we look forward to your safe return in January well-rested and injury-free!

LT Hawley

VT-10 Safety Officer



## Ground Safety Reminder

It has been a great year for the Wildcats! A successful CNATRA Safety and Standardization Inspection is just one of the achievements we have all helped this command reach in the past year. As we turn our eyes towards the future, its important that we stay focused on both our mission and safety. And safety doesn't remain at work when we we go home at the day's end.

In your off duty time, please take a moment to pre-plan and ORM any high risk activities or events that may take place. The winter months bring opportunities for fun, relaxation, and enjoying the holiday spirit. We often forget that even recreational activities should be ORM'd. The ground safety desk is available to help with your ORM and can provide tools to help you better assess, identify, manage, implement and supervise your ground activities. Let's stay safe while enjoying our time off.

This edition of the Scratching Post contains articles written by a few of our own Student Naval Flight Officers. Some of the important topics addressed include driving safety, fire safety, stress and suicide prevention, and motorcycle safety. "Doc" Foster even pitched in with an anecdotal experience regarding the negative effects of alcohol. Please consider the conveyed messages in these articles and spread the word so that we can ensure that all of our Wildcat family stays safe this season!

LT Taylor



## Negative Effects of Alcohol

Many of you know the 12 hour “bottle to throttle” rule. However, what you may not know is that the negative effects of alcohol could last longer than 12 hours. Case in point: As the only flight surgeon aboard my prior duty station, I was called one morning around 2 AM regarding a transient aviator who was in one of the local Greek ERs. So I asked the question, “Why was he there?” Answer: He had had one too many drinks and was now not so conscious with a diagnosis of alcohol poisoning. As I investigated further, this aviator, along with his fellow pilots, had gone out to sample some of the local Greek cuisine with a few of the local brews to boot. Throw in a couple of shots of the local post-dining liquor called Raqi and, long story short, one aviator is passed out and the other two are in a slobbering stupor. That is where I came in. The next day their critical mission was delayed due to their lack of judgment.

Now, I know what you are thinking, “What do drunk American aviators in Greece have to do with me?” Despite what you may think, this has everything to do with our situation here. In Greece the consensus attitude amongst TAD or transient personnel is typically, “Hey, I’m in Greece. It’s got to be either a vacation or a holiday.” Due to this there was a significant uptick in alcohol related incidents during the surge in support of operations over Libya. Of all the potential safety problems identified during recent safety inspections of Training Wing SIX, we stand to lose the most from an alcohol related incident. Now, you see my point? I am not saying to avoid indulging, but I am saying that you need to be responsible especially during this season of festivities.

Back to my drunk aviators in Greece. The major issue was not the fact that they drank themselves into a stupor; it had to do directly with the physiological effects of the amount of alcohol that was in their systems. You see, alcohol is not just a depressant it is also a diuretic and in excessively high quantities the body sees it as a poison which will shut down the respiratory drives in the brain. To combat this the body tries to rid itself of the alcohol through the skin (thus the odor that emanates from your sweat when you drink), the lungs (thus the odor of the breath), and most effectively through the kidneys. When the body rids itself of anything through the kidneys it also has to sacrifice water but also more importantly electrolytes, especially sodium (which is very important to maintain mental functions). In the case of the unconscious aviator his sodium was low enough that he required admission to the hospital. Just

pushing water would only make the situation worse. Each of the aviators needed IV fluids and 72hrs grounding just to get their hydration and electrolytes back to normal.

Now, think in terms of high Gs and their effects on the body. In all reality, the effects of heavy drinking can directly affect your hydration status and your ability to tolerate the effects of G-forces. We all know that dehydration can directly contribute to airsickness. We must also realize that drinking to excess can impact our ability to efficiently perform any task long after the first 12 hours have passed. As in the case of the transient aviators they found that their mission was directly impacted due to their unwise choices. Please take this opportunity to learn from their mistakes and Happy Holidays!

Dr. Daniel Foster LT (FS/FMF)  
“Doc”  
VT-10 Flight Surgeon





## **TRiPS - Travel Safe**

**ENS Daniel Bermudez**

The holidays are here again and just like every other year, families will be traveling to see their loved ones around the country. Before you pack those bags make sure you take a second to plan your trip out. Millions of accidents occur and thousands of lives are lost every year due to poor planning and bad judgment. Drinking and driving, drowsy driving, speeding, and distracted driving are among the many factors that can endanger your holiday travels.

The greatest tool available to everyone is the use of common sense. Every year people fall victim to mistakes that could have easily been prevented. Drunk driving is chief among these mistakes. Every day almost 30 people are killed as a result of drunk driving. During the major holidays these numbers increase as the amount of people setting out on the nation's roads increases. Remaining free from the effects of alcohol before driving and keeping a vigilant lookout for erratic and irresponsible driving are sure-fire ways to ensure that you and your family arrive safely. Driving under the influence is illegal in ALL 50 STATES, and law enforcement will always be on the lookout to ensure that the roads are clear of drivers who have had too much to drink.

Even though most states do not have laws against distracted driving it is still a factor that leads to tragedy and loss. In 2009, 448,000 people were injured in which distracted driving was determined to be a cause. Taking your eyes and attention off of the road increases your probability of an accident dramatically. In an environment that is constantly changing, even a moment's distraction to answer that incoming text or pick up the french-fry that fell under the seat could have dramatic consequences. Remember that even if distracted driving is not illegal in your state, it is still dangerous and should be avoided at all costs. If the need to take your attention off the road is that urgent then pull off the road and stop your vehicle. It is better to arrive a little later than to not arrive at all.

The DoD has many programs in place to help you identify and mitigate the risk factors that could affect your overall wellbeing. The Navy's Travel Risk Planning System (TRiPS) is one such system that helps you plan your route, identify risk factors, and give you further guidance on arriving alive. The Travel Risk Planning System was created in response to the alarming number of servicemen and women involved in travel mishaps.

Every year Sailors and Marines plan out vacations and leave without taking into consideration the need for breaks, planned fuel stops, sleep after an extended period of driving or travel, and alcohol. The TRiPS planner is a simple and easy to use system that allows the service member to input any factors that might influence safety along the intended route. Once the inputs are completed it breaks all the information down in to a safety matrix that easily illustrates the amount and type of risk associated with the trip. The matrix calculates both severity and frequency of the risk based on past information and similar trips compiled by the Naval Safety Center. From here the service member is given tips and suggestions on how to lower their risk and if needed alternate routes that would provide for a safer journey. Minimizing risk is a key goal for today's military. When traveling be sure to assess, adapt, and achieve all of your holiday plans through efficient planning and common sense.



TRiPS can be accessed via Navy Knowledge Online (NKO)

## Holiday Safety

### ENS Lance Hoover

Once again the holiday season is upon us and it is an excellent time to stop and think about stress and safety. During the holidays we all try to avoid stress as much as possible and with careful planning we can avoid the associated hazards.

Driving is one of the most significant risk related activities throughout the winter season. Some of the more obvious pitfalls, such as drinking and driving, using your mobile device, poor long range trip planning, weather, and unchecked vehicle maintenance can be a recipe for disaster. Make sure that you check road conditions and weather forecasts prior to driving. Ice and snow present an often invisible hazard to even the most seasoned driver. Proper trip planning is another way to mitigate risk, utilize the NKO TRiPS tool to assess your route and plan accordingly. Drowsy driving is responsible for 20 percent of all motor vehicle crashes and serious injuries. Don't forget to check your car for regular maintenance, the worst way to find out that your vehicle needs fluids, tires, or snow chains is in the cold of winter. And remember regular drivers react to road conditions, exceptional drivers anticipate road conditions.

Fire safety is another common holiday risk that is often overlooked. There are approximately 7 Christmas tree fires per day from December 15th to January 1st. Make sure to water living Christmas trees, since dead trees and foliage are excellent fire starters. More than 85% of all civilian fire deaths occurred in residences during 2009 and unattended cooking is the leading factor followed by leaving combustibles too close to a heat source. Also make sure to inspect chimneys, fireplaces and vents annually for soundness, deposits, and clearances.

Tensions are increased during the holidays and these few months can be physically and emotionally draining. Stress is often linked to three areas: relationships, finances, and physical demands. To better deal with stress, plan ahead and set aside specific days for events, plan for delays, and learn to say no to events that would increase stress. Even a 15 minute distraction-free time can help clear your mind and restore your calm. Realize that things do not always go as planned. Enjoy your time spent with family and friends. Take in the holiday spirit but remember to consider the larger picture. Improperly handled stress can lead to other warning signs that we must all look out for.

Withdrawal from friends, family, and work are warning signs of depression. The strongest risk factor for suicide is depression. Suicide takes the lives of 30,000 Americans each year, and one person dies by suicide every 16 minutes. These are horrifying statistics and we can do our part to reduce them. Remember to watch out for your peers and “ACT.” ASK what’s bothering the person and how you can help them. CARE about what they are saying, listen without judgment and offer hope. TREATMENT is the next step. Personally help them seek assistance through the chain of command, medical corps or chaplain’s service.





## Lessons Learned from a Day on the Road

ENS John Izzo

I was out for a motorcycle ride with a buddy on a beautiful Saturday afternoon in September. We didn't really have a plan, but the weather was nice enough we thought we'd just ride around the back roads for a while. It was a really relaxing way to spend the day, and everything was going well until we came to a bend in the road where I saw an oncoming pickup taking the turn wide into my lane.

My friend, who was ahead, managed to get through okay, but I didn't have as much room to maneuver and was forced to lay the bike down on the side of the road. Fortunately, I wound up rolling along the asphalt, rather than sliding, and I'm convinced that it saved me quite a few additional injuries. I was lucky that there was no other traffic on the road, which would certainly have run me over as I fell off the motorcycle.

It seems that good luck had a lot to do with helping me survive an otherwise terrible day. But luck alone would not have been enough. There is no doubt my life was saved that day through a combination of preparation and training.

I started that turn the same way I do every turn: with the outside-inside-out method taught in the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's Basic Rider Course (BRC). It allows a rider to see oncoming traffic earlier and smooth out sharp turns, which may sometimes seem like less fun, but is invaluable to the rider who finds himself in need of an angle for a quicker exit. That day, it was the difference between choosing to run off the road, and going head-on with a four ton pickup truck. Certainly not an ideal situation, but at least I had some control over the situation.

I was also wearing a long sleeved shirt, gloves, jeans, and a trusty pair of motorcycle boots, as prescribed by our squadron's policy. I'm sure I am not the first military rider stationed in sunny Florida to gripe about the PPE requirement on a hot day, but one look at the state of my gear after the accident is enough to remind anyone that the rules are in place for a good reason. The pounding that my clothes took that day saved me several layers of skin at the very least, and possibly more.

But out of all the things that helped me that day – the gear, the various safety courses taken on-base through the Navy, and a fair bit of luck, the one thing that I am most grateful for is my decision to wear a helmet. That decision, made the very first time I threw a leg over my father's motorcycle, and again every single time I ride my own, unquestionably saved my life

that day. Even in a fairly low-speed accident (I probably hit the pavement going about 35mph), cracking a skull against the road after falling from a moving vehicle is not something that can be easily recovered from, if at all. Even with the protection of a DOT approved full-face helmet, I was still dazed after I came to a stop. But I got up, took the helmet off, and walked away.

I'd like to think I learned a few things from my experience that I can use to make myself better the next time I ride. The fact that I was able to walk away from what could easily have been a fatal collision really vindicates the rider training and protective gear mandated by the Navy. What sticks out the most in my mind, however, is the idea that no matter how good a driver you think you are, you are always subject to circumstances beyond your control, and you are most likely to be tested when you least expect it. Incidents like this underscore the need for good preparation. Get trained, wear the right gear, and have a plan! A little advanced knowledge of the area, the weather and the capabilities of you and your bike can give you options in a bad situation, or help you avoid it entirely.



ENS Izzo was properly trained in the Basic Rider Course (BRC) and Military Sports Bike Rider Course (MSRC) through the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF).





Safety First... If there is doubt, then there is no doubt!

# VT-10 WILDCATS

