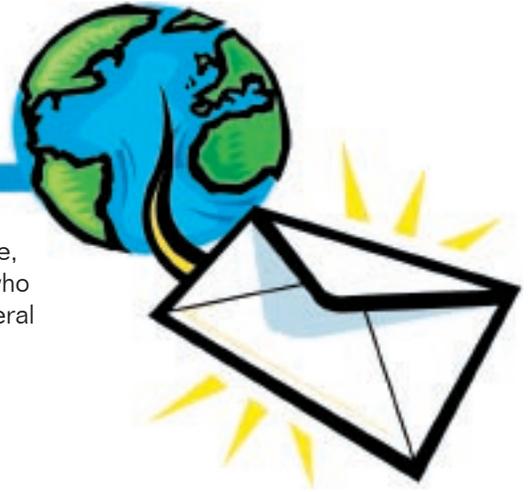


Reader e-mail



Most editors call this section “Letters to the Editor,” but, this being the computer age, we received only e-mail responses to our previous issue. Thanks to those Marines who took time to let us know what they thought, what mistakes they caught, and for general feedback. You can reach the editor at jarthaud@safetycenter.navy.mil.

Re: Scuba Nightmare Ground Warrior, Winter 01-02

After reading this story, I asked myself two questions: Were these divers certified, and were they present during their dive classes?

All certified divers should know that if equipment is malfunctioning, you should abort the dive and have your equipment checked thoroughly by a certified technician.

The “high-pitched hissing sound” should have been the first warning for these Marines to abort their dive. I have witnessed what happens when people do not have their gear inspected annually, or they forget basic diving skills.

Scuba is an enjoyable and relatively safe sport, but you must be responsible, have a dive buddy and make sure your survival equipment is in top working order. It is also beneficial to know what to do in an emergency. These two Marines were indeed very lucky!

GySgt B. D. Larson Jr.

NAMTRA Mar Unit, Cherry Point

Re: Scuba Nightmare Ground Warrior, Winter 01-02

These two divers made many poor decisions and failed to follow basic safety procedures. Either they never were taught basic dive rules, or they ignored them.

First, divers should “plan the dive, and dive the plan.” These two Marines broke this rule when they

started a second dive while still in the water—on the same tank of air.

Second, diving is an equipment-intensive sport. Before any dive, you should inspect your gear. I suspect these two did not do a pre-dive safety check. However, if they did, when the corporal experienced equipment problems, they should have terminated the dive.

There is very little a diver can do to inspect gear while bobbing at the surface. You possibly could check to make sure equipment is hooked up properly and that air is turned on, but, again, that should have been done during the pre-dive safety check.

Also, since a basic open-water diver is not qualified or trained to service equipment, these two should have terminated their diving plans until a qualified specialist had inspected the equipment. Only a fool would continue to dive with potentially faulty equipment—yet, that is exactly what these Marines did.

Third, the number one rule to diving is never hold your breath. Holding your breath like the corporal did can cause an air embolism, even with a small change of depth. He should have signaled to his buddy that he was having breathing problems and asked to share air. All divers are taught to do this, and it is simple as long as the two divers stay together.

Fourth, when divers experience problems at depth they should stop, think, and then act. Instead, the corporal panicked and ripped the lance corporal’s regulator out of his mouth. At that point

it was the lance corporal's turn to stop, think, and act. Instead, he panicked, dropped his weights, and inflated his BCD. It was this action—shooting to the surface dragging his friend along—that most likely caused the corporal's injury.

CWO3 John Adams
III MEF Disbursing

This "success story" (no one died) should have been presented as an example of what not to do.—Ed.

Re: Next Time We'll Slow Rope Ground Warrior, Winter 01-02

Informative article on fastrope risks, but I'm concerned about the first paragraph. It mentioned that Marines were unbuckled while the helicopter was still moving. This is a wrong thing to do. We studied this issue at length following a helicopter crash where we lost several Marines and one Sailor.

A contributing factor to the injuries was the fact that all personnel unbuckled and stood when they were one minute out. Directives clearly require all to remain buckled until the helo is in a hover. However, local SOPs had modified this procedure to speed up egress.

The problem is that unbuckling and standing before hover dramatically increases risk. Safety in high-risk activities requires rigid adherence to directives, not use of local SOPs.

Col. Jim Walker
CO Security Battalion
MCB, Camp Pendleton

You are correct; during fast-rope operations, you must wait until the helicopter is in a "stable hover." In the past, SOPs often tied unbuckling to the "one-minute out" call, as a minute is often necessary for Marines to prep weapons, don packs, and prep for egress.

In the mishap you referenced, had these Marines been seated and strapped in, they would have found themselves in positions more closely resembling the helo-dunker-crash scenarios, which always start with Marines seated and wearing seat belts. The survivors stated since they were unbuckled when the helicopter crashed, they were thrown around the cabin and disoriented. This in turn impeded their efforts to find egress routes.

When to unbuckle depends on the method of insert and careful cost-benefit analysis for the mission. Unbuckling in flight may be required. During SAR jumps and swim casts, for example, the helo never lands or hovers, so Marines and Sailors must unbuckle and egress in flight.—Ed.

Photo by Sgt. Kevin Dolloson



Photo by Cpl. Scott Whittington



Re: Mk-19 Reminders Ground Warrior, Winter 01-02

There is a discrepancy between the photo and the text. "... must wear eye protection...and gloves." I don't think the eye protection of the Marine in the photo is going to do him any good. I can't see the

Marine behind the weapon, but it doesn't look like he has eye protection, either.

Kip Otis-Diehl
HQBn, 29 Palms

Re: Mk-19 Reminders
Ground Warrior, Winter 01-02

I have message traffic that requires all personnel firing HE/HEDP to have ballistic eye protection, in addition to helmets and body armor. This applies to the gun crew and anyone within 310 meters of a potential impact.

The article photo shows the gunner without eye protection. Even in a staged photo, all safety equipment should be provided.

Donald Lauer Jr.
Range Safety, 29 Palms

Truth hurts. I examined several photographs of Marines firing Mk-19s using HE/HEDP ammunition. These photos were not staged and show Marines



Photo by Capt. Peter Forsythe



Photo by 1stLt. William F. Klumpp

wearing what they are wearing. These photos were all taken several months after the notice was released. However, we had a hard time finding Marines wearing ballistic eye protection or the other required PPE—hence, the article title “Mk-19 Reminders.”—Ed.

Re: Mishap Information

I am looking for some information about a mid-1990s mishap where a Dragon gunner assigned to a rifle company was fatally shot when he moved to his hot position. I'd like to use this information in an operational pause brief to leaders in our battalion.

Capt Paul Nugent
1st MarDiv

This mishap occurred during a night-defensive live-fire exercise. A rifle company established a linear position with three platoons online. Sectors were assigned, and fire-plan sketches were completed. Several hours later, the center platoon was ordered to move forward approximately 500 meters.

Unfortunately, the platoon located to the left didn't re-confirm or adjust their lateral limits, which now overlapped the center platoons position. Had machine gunners walked their FPF to determine dead space, they probably would have stumbled across the Dragon team positioned inside their right lateral limit.

If your unit would like similar mishap lessons-learned information, call or e-mail your questions. Don't forget to check the Ground Warrior archives on the media department's website at www.safetycenter.navy.mil/media/groundwarrior.—Ed.



Photo by LCpl. Nathan E. Eason