

ORMing the Commute: **Boy, This Is Easy**

Yesterday at quitting time, my boss told me that I'm supposed to start using ORM while I drive to and from work. I said, "Aye, aye." I must not have been very convincing, because he then asked if I knew what ORM was. I replied, "Absolutely."

He didn't ask any more questions, but I figured I'd probably better find out before he asks again.

So here I am at 0700, preparing to hop behind the wheel of my Civic hatchback. It's only six miles to my command—a few lights and a couple miles of interstate.

I glance at the tires as I walk to my driveway. I had a low tire during a trip three weeks ago, and I always like to catch those leaks before I get stuck with a flat in traffic, especially if there isn't a good place to pull over or pull off. I hate driving with that little doughnut spare. It feels weird, it's only good for a couple hundred miles, and you aren't supposed to drive with them over about 50 miles per hour (good luck on a highway).

I don't check the oil every day, but I check it pretty often. A former senior member of the Naval Safety Center staff once spent six grand on an engine rebuild for his new Dodge Durango, all for a lack of checking the old dipstick and changing the filter.

I'm leaving a little early because I hate being in a hurry. I just want to get to work as quickly as possible, without getting all hung up with cops, tickets, tow trucks, and insurance agents. I know some guys whose insurance costs them more than their rent and electric bills combined. Not good.

The neighborhood part of my commute is easy, but I still have to keep an eye out for skaters or kids darting out between cars on their way to school.

I take a right on a busier street—three lanes in either direction—and here's where I meet the biggest risk: the other drivers. A lot of them are either in a hurry or just plain incompetent, or both. It always seems that some of them ought to get themselves a race car, take some driving lessons, and find the nearest track. And by the way, the track won't have a number for a name with a capital I and a dash in front of it. I-564 in Norfolk, in other words, isn't a NASCAR venue.

The weather today is fine. I'm not hearing the fog horn from the terminal, and it isn't cold enough to freeze. I'm



never concerned about myself in bad weather. It's the other knuckleheads who don't even slow down that worry me. They seem to think that speed limit signs are some sort of guarantee, not something based on good conditions.

It amazes me how many people drive while distracted. There's one eating a breakfast biscuit. Yesterday, I saw a woman putting on mascara. Last week's prize went to a guy doing a crossword puzzle that he had propped on his steering wheel. Hmm, better make sure I don't get distracted while cataloging other people's distractions.

Here I am on the interstate, accelerating up to speed. For starters, I'm going to back off from behind this tractor-trailer—I hate not being able to see what is ahead of the vehicle ahead of me. Never know when the guy in front is going to swerve around a cinderblock or a piece of lumber, leaving you no time to react.

I arrive at work unscathed. The day passes quickly, and soon I'm in my car, just about to head to the dentist. I'm running late, because I couldn't seem to get away on time. Hmm. Maybe I'll take the back way and just skip the interstate—the traffic is always worse on the highway in the afternoon, the other drivers are frazzled, and they always seem to be in even more of a hurry than they were in the morning, if that's possible. And since I got the word that we aren't supposed to drive on base and talk on a cellphone, before I start the engine, I'll call my dentist and let him know I might be a few minutes late. Anyone who doesn't think cellphones are distracting isn't paying attention.

There was something that I was supposed to do today, what was that? Oh yeah, look up ORM. I'll do that first thing tomorrow. ■

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