

ORM Never Should Take a Holiday

By AZ1 Aaron L. Chaney

Because I'm a member of the command's enlisted safety committee, I had hoped I'd never do anything that would become fodder for an article in a safety magazine. After all, I'm an E-5 with more than 10 years of service, and I've been both a student and a teacher during safety stand-downs.

My story is about a trip home I made before deployment. I completed my vehicle checklist and left Norfolk. Because it was a nice day, I decided to take the scenic route: a state highway, instead of the interstate.

At 2100, I was on a stretch of road through a beautiful national park when my right, front tire blew. I was traveling uphill, and I concentrated on steering while my car slowed. To quote many an aviator, "There I was..." stopped on a two-lane road on top of a mountain in the middle of a forest, with no ambient light other than what my car provided. Here is where I almost dropped the ball.

I unpacked my truck and removed the spare tire and jack, then moved to the front. At this point, I realized my luggage on the ground might prevent a passerby from seeing my vehicle until it was too late, so I repacked everything. I hate admitting I already had jacked up the front tire before that little voice spoke to me: "middle of the night, two-lane road, flat tire, no flares or lights, not exactly the best place to change tires."

With visions of a mishap report quickly forming in my mind, I lowered the truck, stowed my spare and jack in the passenger seat, and drove very slowly to a safer area. I found a stretch of road with a passing lane and a house nearby, so I changed tires and continued to a convenience store in the next town. I was lucky enough to find a Navy recruiter there who directed me to a motel and told me where I could get my tire repaired the next day.

What did I learn from this experience? First, don't forget to take your ORM training with you.



Second, the unexpected can and will hurt you. I have to wonder if the results would have been the same if my tire had blown on the interstate, with its 70-mph speed limit. The speed limit on the state highway was only 50 mph. The interstate would have provided a shoulder, but I know the faster speed would have increased the dangers. I'm glad my vehicle checklist included verifying the pressure in my spare tire.

Third, take your time. I started getting in a hurry because I knew the flat would put me behind schedule. Ensure your vehicle is back to 100 percent before continuing. "Better late than never," is a cliché but true.

Fourth, you find shipmates in the strangest places. What are the odds of finding a BM1 in uniform in a small mountain town in West Virginia? 

AZ1 Aaron L. Chaney was assigned to USS *Harry S. Truman* (CVN-75) when he wrote this article.

Every year, military personnel are killed when they are struck by traffic while alongside major roads and highways. If you have to stop on the side of the road, be sure to leave yourself plenty of room. —Ed.