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It's Friday, and everyone is ready for the weekend. Who would even consider spending 34 of the weekend's hours in a vehicle? Some Sailors do.

During operational risk management (ORM) training I conducted recently aboard a ship based in Bremerton, Wash., I asked my audience—all PO2s and below—how many traveled on weekends. I've asked the same question aboard more than 150 ships and have not been surprised by the varied responses, but, there's a first time for everything, as I was to find out.

Several Sailors gave standard answers: They traveled anywhere from two to six hours one way for their weekend liberty. I had not yet received the answer I wanted, so I again asked my audience the travel question. Wherever I've conducted ORM training, at least one Sailor traveled 10 to 14 hours one way during weekend liberty. Finally, a PO2 raised his hand, and I asked him where he went on weekends. He replied that on every other non-duty weekend, he and at least two other Sailors drove from Bremerton to Los Angeles, a 17-hour trip one way!

Although this command had an aggressive driver-safety program requiring Sailors driving distances greater than 300 miles to submit an out-of-area request chit, that didn't stop these Sailors:

They just didn't submit one. The Sailor assured me he and his shipmates applied ORM's four principles to their travels: Accept risk if benefits outweigh the cost, accept no unnecessary risk, anticipate and manage risk by planning, and make risk decisions at the right level.

He also insisted that, when traveling, he and his shipmates adhered to the ORM five-step process: Identify hazards, assess hazards, make risk decisions, implement controls, and supervise.

This Sailor never informed his chain of command about his lengthy weekend travels. The command also didn't realize that private vehicle (automobile) accidents claimed the most lives among Sailors and Marines during the past five years. For fiscal year 2001, the Department of the Navy (Sailors and Marines) had 90 deaths involving Sailors and Marines in privately owned vehicles. There were already 26 vehicle deaths in the first quarter of FY02.

Sailors driving 34 hours during a two-day weekend certainly won't contribute to reducing these statistics. Despite the fact our Sailors continue to apply ORM principles and use the five-step process, sometimes they should be stopped and asked a simple question, "Where are you going this weekend?" 🌐

It's the Weekend!
**Do You Know Where
Your Sailors Are?**