

# Road rules

## Spotless driving record tough to maintain



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I'm frustrated. I mean, really frustrated. I think I'm failing one of the most basic courses life has to offer.

Diving. I am beginning to wonder if I'm cut out for it at all.

The driving gods have been sending me a series of signs recently. You'd think I'd pay attention to them at some point, wouldn'tcha?

They've been telling me I should take my car away permanently (far, far away from any Lincoln roads, UNL lots, meters, buildings, cliffs, etc.). I should ship my beloved Toyota back home to North Platte and let my 17-year-old sister have some fun for awhile.

But I don't pay attention. I don't heed their warnings. I continue to anger all of the nasty drivers on the road. They must love me.

At one time, I was thoroughly convinced I was one of the best drivers around and I'd never incur any tickets or have any accidents. (You're really laughing hard now, aren't you?)

Just about the time I was saying that to myself, I got my first speeding ticket. I was 17. I was blessed with another three months later. My reign of skill-less driving had begun.

I slowly but surely progressed into acquiring a not-so-rare form of I.D.S. (Idiot Driving Syndrome) that so many teen-agers possess. I loved to do things like put on lipstick, reach for random objects in the back seat and attempt to change my oil while going 45 mph.

Somehow, I was able to narrowly avoid a series of what could have been

pretty serious accidents for a few years. I don't know how. I still cannot explain how I could have been such a stupid driver and not have wrecked my car. It was miraculous.

The miraculousness became clouded when I was a sophomore here. I hit a pillar in the Gateway parking garage as I was backing out. Hey, it came out of nowhere, all right? It did some minor damage to my bumper, but not really enough to freak out about. Little did I know, there would soon be something to freak out about.

The miracle that had been my (practically) accident-free driving ended last summer.

One sunny, beautiful day in June, I decided to drive around in order to de-stress myself. I took a turn, and my frosty beverage flew off of the seat next to me. I was reaching down to those highly-illegal drinks not allowed on campus (you know, a *Coca-Cola*), when I scraped the entire side of my car along the bumper corner of a Bronco.

The Bronco's taillight cover was broken. My damage came to \$1,500. Ain't life funny?

I couldn't believe it. I was in shock. How could such a good driver, like myself, have gotten into such a snafu?

In all of my pondering, I did develop a theory: I was drinking a Coke that day. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln has an alliance with Pepsi. Was it merely a coincidence that the other driver looked a little too much like the chancellor? I think not.

The point to my ramblings, however, is not that the administration is out to get me. I know that already. The point is that I, as a driver, had become tarnished and blackened. I was no longer an accident virgin. I had joined the despicable ranks of Lincoln drivers.

Lincoln drivers are absolutely awful, and I fear that I have turned into one of them.

I'm actually surprised I haven't gotten killed on our roadways. Outside of New York, I'm not sure I've ever seen such disgusting displays of asinine behavior on the road.

Lincoln drivers are constantly running red lights, speeding through stop signs, going 50 mph in parking lots, jumping medians, forgetting there are turn signals on their cars and hitting little old

ladies. Correct me if I'm wrong, but didn't we learn in (your favorite high school class and mine) driver's ed to be defensive drivers? This town is full of offensive drivers, and it's really starting to get to me.

Personally, I don't think I should be getting flipped off and sworn at by the driver behind me for trying to make a left turn. I don't feel I should be sitting at intersections for two minutes waiting for people to finish running the red light.

I don't think I should have to bow down to the bad drivers of Lincoln.

Unfortunately, if I want to get anywhere in this town, I have to drive. Walking is more dangerous, anyway. I've become a part of the malicious gang that is Lincoln traffic, and I hate it. But I'm learning to cope.

I've joined

the "Frustrated and Pissed-Off Lincoln Drivers Anonymous" support group at my local YMCA and am taking steps to be patient with my fellow road warriors.

I'm actually trying to drive less, but then I have to worry about parking services and all of their little toadies.

The few. The vengeful. The UNL parking patrol.

(Quit ruining my life, dammit! I have a blue permit, and I'm not afraid to use it!)

All I can really do now is wait for that day. You know, the day when I'm many miles away from Lincoln, and I have my own personal limo driver taking me everywhere.

Sigh. Until then, it seems... hey! Hey! Dammit, that's my car you're towing!



MATT HANEY/DN

# Ready, set ... STOP

## Changing intersection light order would decrease number of accidents



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Do you spend a lot of time thinking about commonly accepted norms and habits? I do, because nothing is ever static. Everything is always flowing, changing, like energy, or a river, or your mind.

Now ponder for a moment. How could every driving society virtually eliminate the occurrence of accidents and deaths caused by inconsiderate drivers who run red lights?

The fact that grid-shaped, intersecting streets are the worst layout for driving efficiency and pedestrian and bicycle safety shouldn't be a reason for planners to ignore the fundamentals of traffic flow.

This is beside the fact that Lincoln needs to better time its stop lights, adjust them for motion sensing around town, especially downtown, and better

wire and maintain pedestrian-initiated stop lights.

It is much easier to alter behavior than to reroute streets, and there is one seemingly insignificant change that, if pursued, would virtually eliminate the dangers of cross-shaped intersections.

There is no room for mistakes in matters of life and death, and this one overlooked, deadly mistake is accepted by this and many other countries.

No need to think too much longer about this one, the answer is right in front of our faces: *Change the order of intersection lights.*

Change the order of intersection lights from green ... yellow, red to yellow, green ... red. Why does this make a difference? Let me explain.

Our current light pattern is unconsciously dangerous and perpetuates red-light "running." A driver sees a yellow light that is turning red and usually speeds up to get through it, rather than stopping as the law says.

I just took my driver's test, and the first intersection I encountered, I ran a yellow light. Oops. Why did I run this light? Because the yellow light wasn't enough of a deterrent to make me stop coasting downhill.

If the light would have turned immediately red from green, I would have stopped, because subconsciously, red means stop, and the subconscious perpetually directs one's actions.

But I told the tester that I don't understand the current light order and therefore am not obligated to abide by

its rules, so I passed the test.

How many people told you when you were learning to drive, or still tell you, that yellow means "hurry up" or "stop," as well as "caution?" We have been indoctrinated to think of a yellow light in this way.

Furthermore, what do we do when we are the first car in line at an intersection? We look at the cross-lights to see when their red light comes, and begin creeping into the intersection.

We have learned the behavior that when we approach a yellow light at an intersection we should speed up to get through, and we anticipate the light's change to green. Both of these are results of inefficient traffic flow and frustration with this inefficient system.

The same is true for pedestrians. How many people run across the cross-walk when the "don't walk" is blinking, or when no cars are crossing? Everybody does, because the blinking light doesn't mean "stop" or "don't go," it means "hurry up" or "look around and proceed at your own risk."

Follow my points?

These are deadly mixed signals that cause thousands of accidents every year and can be remedied by making one simple, obvious change: Changing the light order to yellow, green ... red.

We are already conditioned to anticipate movement into the intersection and have connected the yellow light with a hurried quality. For this reason, having the yellow light precede the green "go" light is logical and

therefore, safer.

We do not say "ready, set, stop," we say, "ready, set, go."

It would be very easy to implement this change, and the resulting reduction in intersection related accidents would be astounding.

The only negative results of such a change would be: 1) people encountering a red light would slam to a halt and possibly be rear-ended by absentminded followers, and 2) those encountering yellow lights would slow down, but then the light would turn green and they would proceed. Neither are really negative, are they?

Yellow, green ... red light order works like this. The line of cars waiting at an intersection would see both sides come to a complete stop before their light turns yellow.

The yellow light then initiates movement into an intersection that is clear from red-light "runners" because of the immediate red and time delay. The yellow light then persists for two or three seconds and then turns fully green.

For those approaching the intersection, the light would turn from green immediately to red. No hesitation, no questioning, no thought of what to do, the red light means: "stop now!" The only reason people are running red lights is the hesitation and questioning involved with encountering a yellow light.

Nobody in his or her right mind runs red lights that are solid red. With

an immediate, red light "stop," the traffic is stopped in its tracks and cross-traffic flow is safely initiated.

If a driver encounters a red light that then turns to yellow, the driver could proceed without worry as the light would then turn green and the cross-traffic would already be stopped.

These concepts are applicable to pedestrian lights as well. The light should not turn from "walk" (white) to "maybe don't walk" (blinking red) to "don't walk" (solid red). It should turn from "walk" (white) to "maybe walk" (blinking white) to "don't walk" (solid red).

The walk sign shouldn't be white either — it should be green, because green means "go." Maybe the white light really means "walk on top of the repressed classes."

Putting speed bumps on 25-45 mph streets also will decrease accidents and increase awareness, but I think the Lincoln Police Department would rather continue ticketing speeders to buffer their already exploding budget than promote responsible driving by the use of speed bumps.

Does this all sound too easy to be true? Well, it is, and streetlights already work in this order in some countries.

We may very well see this change coming, because it is easy to observe the benefits of a yellow, green ... red intersection light order, the primary one being the virtual elimination of intersection accidents and fatalities.

Convinced?