

# Not Neutral On Neutral-Shift Practice

**Dear Tom and Ray:**

With all the news about uncontrolled acceleration, my wife has decided that she wants to be prepared in case it ever happens to her. We know the proper thing to do is shift the automatic transmission into neutral. To get practice in this maneuver, she has been slipping the car into neutral while she's driving. She'll put it in neutral while travelling at speed, and then let the car slow down a bit, then pop it back into

gear and keep going. I know this is a good thing for her to know, but it's starting to drive me nuts. Is it OK for the transmission? It's coming close to an argument for us. Can you tell me if what she's doing is OK? — **Mike**

**TOM:** Is she doing it five times during every trip to the convenience store? That may be grounds for a domestic dispute.

**RAY:** But if she's doing it only occasion-



**Click & Clack**

ally, just forget about it. It's not going to do any damage to the transmission.

**TOM:** If it is a very frequent occurrence,

then you need to appeal to her on both humanitarian and safety grounds.

**RAY:** On the safety side, you don't want her

to be so focused on unintended acceleration that someday she'll be practicing her coasting in neutral when she suddenly needs to accelerate to get out of the way of another vehicle.

**TOM:** Right. You never know what kind of accident you may be involved in, so you don't want to be so obsessed with one kind that you inadvertently increase the likelihood of another.

**RAY:** And on humanitarian grounds, you'll just have to tell her that it's driving you ape-

dung. Suggest to her that perhaps her "shift to neutral" practice could safely be reduced to, say, once a month. Like a fire drill, you want to do it often enough that you know how to respond in an actual emergency, but not so often that you're spending half your life outside, shivering in your pajamas. Good luck, Mike.

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