

# Hyper-Milers: 'Gliding' Toward Fuel Conservation

Small Group of Conservationists 'Squeeze Every Last Drop' Out of Their Gas Usage

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Very early today, in a house adorned with leftover Halloween decorations, stirred a man consumed with energy. Literally.

Wayne Mitchell is focused on saving energy. He eats his breakfast long before sunrise just so he can allow for a morning commute that will burn less gasoline. "I make the effort simply because it is the right thing to do," he said.

Today, after he unplugged his car, Mitchell allowed 'Nightline' to join him on his daily journey to

downtown Chicago. Every inch of it was designed to maximize his gas mileage.

Starting with the plug that's connected to a heater that kept the engine warm overnight. "Have to unplug the car, don't want to drag the extension chord downtown."

Mitchell drives a hybrid, of course. He's powering up his Toyota Prius in gloves and overcoat on a 43°F Chicago morning.

"It's a little chilly," he said, "and typically I'm not going to turn the heat on in the Prius until it gets to be close to zero... Any heat I take out of the engine isn't there to help with the car, with the fuel mileage."

Mitchell is a "hypermiler", one of a small, but growing contingent determined to squeeze every last drop out of a gallon of gas.

"Oil is a finite resource," said Mitchell. "We're not gonna have it forever, our kids are gonna have less of it and it's just important to conserve it until we come up with alternatives."

So conservation drives everything Mitchell does behind the wheel. This includes the meandering route along Chicago's side-streets, bypassing the morning's stop-and-go rush hour.

On his 18-mile commute, Mitchell times the 68 stoplights to avoid using the brakes. "What I'm trying to do is come up to the light when it turns green so I don't have to stop."

## The 'Pulse and Glide'

One of his tricks is called "pulse and glide" accelerating briefly, then coasting for as long as possible.

While at a stoplight, Mitchell explains the process of "gliding" or using practically no energy while waiting for the light to turn green. All of this can be aggravating to the drivers behind him.

But Mitchell shuns the more extreme hypermiler techniques such as tailgating trucks to catch their drafts or shutting off his engine altogether to save even more gas on his "glides."

Hypermilers like Mitchell keep coasting. His tires are over-inflated to reduce friction. His hood is insulated to keep the engine warm, and he always stays below the speed limit. All that helps save energy and money.

"I've saved about 2,200 gallons of gas in three years," said Mitchell.

Today, to downtown Chicago, his commute had taken just under an hour. The gas mileage? 62.8 miles per gallon

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About 40% better than the typical Prius.

Mitchell says he's still not satisfied. "There's always room for improvement."

### **A Hypermiler Missionary**

That's what hypermilers are all about. On websites like [priuschat.com](http://priuschat.com), they trade tips for squeezing even more out of a gallon. Once a year, they gather for Hybrid Fest, where the highlight is a race to get the best gas mileage. Contestants shed their shoes to lighten the load.

This year's winner: 168 miles per a gallon. Mitchell, too, is something of a hypermiler missionary.

Last summer, he took his family on a road trip out west, installing engine heaters for anyone on the web who asked 15 in all.

After working all day as an engineer for the city of Chicago, Mitchell climbed back in his Prius for the commute home. He was convinced he had done his part to save some energy, and the planet, too.

"It might be a very small difference, but it definitely is a difference. The difference I'm making not only affects me today, it's gonna affect my kids in the future."