

On Board Diagnostics: How an Auto Insurance Program Can Improve Gas Mileage

By Kathryn Peters

With the enrollment into a program called *Progressive MyRate*, Progressive Insurance Company offers users a rate discount on a six month auto insurance policy, and, depending on the driving habits recorded by the program, a potential discount for the user's renewal rate. Progressive mails participants a small device to plug into the OBD2 (On Board Diagnostic) port in their car. The device records and wirelessly sends the user's daily number of trips, mileage, speed, hard acceleration, hard breaking, and what times of day each trip is taken. The user is able to log onto the *Progressive MyRate* website and view their statistics for each day, the averages for each week, and compare them to the average statistics for MyRate users throughout the company. At the end of the six month policy, if the user's driving behavior is less frequent and less risky than the average driver in their area, Progressive offers the user a discount on a renewal policy.

When I first enrolled into the MyRate program, I was apprehensive about the Big Brother-like invasion of privacy. However, I discovered the ease with which I could monitor my own driving habits improved them. I am less likely to use my car for an easily walk-able trip, and, when I do drive, I consciously drive less aggressively. The goal I have in mind while driving is no longer how fast I can arrive to my destination, but how I can best reduce the recorded aggressive acceleration and hard breaking I will see when I log into my account at the end of the day. In addition to verifying my safety as a driver to the Progressive insurance company, less aggressive driving habits have also significantly increased my car's gas mileage; helping both my bank account and the environment.