



# Pittsburgh Regional Healthcare Initiative

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## Example from aviation

### The price of rushing

Norm Komich, a senior airline captain, is an experienced instructor in Crew Resource Management (CRM). CRM is a training program at most airlines worldwide based on the recognition that human factors underlie most aviation errors. Like surgery, an airline flight is a complex system of interdependencies among flight and cabin crew, air traffic control (ATC), flight operations, ground staff and flight planning personnel.

The most common reason physicians give for writing illegible or incomplete orders or using unapproved abbreviations is haste. Studies from England show that physicians' handwriting is no more or less legible than anyone writing in a big hurry.

I have no time. Make my schedule and my day manageable," said one physician, "and then I'll be able to take the time I need to write better."

#### **An aviation parallel?**

Captain Komich recently posted this missive on rushing to an aviation safety discussion page:

*Two of the common threads in aviation accidents are distractions and being rushed. I would like to comment on the latter. We fly for a variety of reasons, but one that stands out is that it is a faster way of transportation. [Yet speed] can actually contribute to an accident... When we rush we can miss or overlook seemingly simple but crucial items.*

*The dilemma is being aware that we are actually rushing.*

*Without question, the folks at ATC can often put us in a situation where we have to rush.*

*Last minute runway changes, delayed descents, expedited departures, etc. can all force us to hurry up and, in so doing, make an error.*

#### **Real example of an insidious problem**

Captain Komich gives a real-world example where rushing might have seemed necessary.

Was it?

*Once as I approached the active [runway] after a short taxi from the blocks, tower cleared me into position and hold [line up for takeoff]. I*

*replied that I needed a minute to complete checklists and I would call them when I was ready. Tower replied that I could take my delay on the active [runway], to taxi into position and hold and call when ready. I did this and so help me goodness, 30 seconds later while half way through my checklists, Tower called and asked: 'Are you ready yet? There's an aircraft [preparing to land on] your runway.'*

*So even though I tried to avoid rushing, I either had to rush, or force my fellow aviator to go around. [In addition to the adrenaline, go-arounds require pilots to file paperwork afterward to explain the reasons.]*

In the end, despite powerful motivation to rush the routine checklist, Komich did not take off; the other aircraft did a go-around; and paperwork reflected the misunderstanding with ATC.



### ***Rushing in health care***

When the nurses at the VAPHS complained that they couldn't comply with hand hygiene requirements because they didn't have enough time, their team leader took it seriously. The team set about streamlining systems, making supplies readily available, making work less hard, in a successful attempt to "create" more time. It was important to learn why the nurses were so rushed. Again, the systems were to blame, and fixing them freed up necessary time.

***The dilemma is being aware that we are actually rushing.***

*—Norm Komich  
Airline captain,  
CRM instructor*

Rushing is dangerous, especially when lives are at stake, as they are in the fuselage of an airplane or at the tip of a physician's pen. Managing the "busy-ness" often involves looking at how to streamline systems to free up more time. It also involves continuously realizing that a task as mundane as writing out a prescription—like the mundane task of reading the same checklist before every single takeoff—can be a matter of life and death.

