

Ten-Minute Training Topic

Parking Lots

Statistics

- ❖ 14 percent of all claims for auto damage involved parking lot collisions, and 13 percent of pedestrian fatalities occur in parking lots (IIHS and BLS)
- ❖ Many of these “fender benders” occur due to driver distraction or complacency, and unpredictable actions by pedestrians or cyclists
- ❖ Parking lots account for large numbers of unreported collisions since they occur on private property and typically involve property damage only. These two factors reduce the likelihood that police reports would be filed.

Introduction

Most drivers have to deal with parking lots when making a delivery or simply stopping by a shopping center to pick up lunch. Parking lots can present dangerous conditions and risks because of poor roadway design, inadequate or confusing signage, landscaping that interferes with a driver's sightlines and pedestrians who do not pay attention to their surroundings.

Many low speed collisions as well as common scrapes and dings occur in parking lots. In fact, parking lot collisions account for as many as one in five automobile insurance claims yearly, according to the Independent Insurance Agents of America (IIAA). Additionally, parking lots are prime territory for negligent drivers, burglars, pickpockets, carjackers, and vandals. In fact, an estimated eighty percent of crimes committed at shopping facilities occur in parking lots.

Parking lots present the very real chance of hitting pedestrians (especially children) while backing, turning or negotiating intersections with cross walks.

While most drivers exercise care when traveling on main roads, once they enter a parking lot, they typically become distracted while looking for a parking spot, or searching for the location of a specific store. When motorists are in a hurry they often stop looking for cross traffic, or assume others will see them coming and automatically stop for them.

Parking lots are often suffer from little (if any) maintenance. This leads to missing stop signs, faded traffic lane stripes, and potholes that make vehicles dodge from side to side. Finally, vehicles exiting from the lot create additional problems when they start to enter active traffic lanes without due regard to oncoming traffic.

What can be done to avoid collisions and/or injuries?

Here are a few tips assembled from many sources:

While driving:

- ❖ Wear your seatbelt – even low speed collisions can throw you around the cabin of your vehicle
- ❖ Obey traffic signs such as Stop and Yield
- ❖ Use your turn signals and headlights – make sure your vehicle is seen and watch for distracted motorists who do not see you coming
- ❖ Obey traffic lanes and avoid cutting diagonally across lots (AND watch for cars cutting diagonally across lots)
- ❖ Be extra careful at entrances and exits – motorists stop suddenly and for no apparent reason – tailgaters often end up in rear-end collisions, and rushing while turning into access road or side street traffic can also lead to collisions
- ❖ Be especially careful in lots that contain Post Offices, package stores and other locations where people are prone to dart in and out hastily in a hurry to be on their way
- ❖ Be extra careful during peak times when reckless drivers may speed through lanes while trying to get a “better spot” closer to the shops

- ❖ Some drivers are on the “hunt” for an ideal parking spot and may drive erratically – watching for open spots rather than watching where they are driving! These drivers often circle the lanes nearest to their store – parking away from stores may make a longer walk, but prove less dangerous from a vehicle collision standpoint
- ❖ Watch out for parents pushing baby carriages and strollers – they may assume you are going to stop for them or may not pay attention to cross traffic

When parking:

- ❖ Double check to turn off your headlights before leaving your vehicle
- ❖ Be wary of "runaway" shopping carts – try to avoid parking near cart “corrals”
- ❖ Park in well-lit areas and complain to management if there are no adequately lit areas available.
- ❖ Avoid parking near mini-vans as these vehicles typically carry children who may play on, around, behind or near your commercial vehicle
- ❖ Keep your distance from the curb – Although you do not want the tail of your vehicle sticking into the lane of travel, there may be other dangers associated with parking too close to the curb. Higher suspensions of commercial vehicles may allow the bumper to hang over walkways causing tripping hazards to pedestrians. Additionally, parking close to the curb during summer months may invite damage from lawn maintenance crews who need to trim, edge and/or clear clippings near the curb
- ❖ Make note of your neighbors - When parking, check the outside edge of your neighbor's doors. Door edges that are littered with chips and scratches may indicate a lack of care or concern for property by the other driver
- ❖ Park beneath lights not trees – Although many people try to park under trees for shade advantages; however, debris that falls out of trees (bird feces, sap, and seeds) can damage your vehicle. Lights, on the other hand provide added security if you happen to be arriving or exiting in the dark.
- ❖ Whenever possible, park to avoid any back up moves. If you must back up, take extra time to look around the vehicle while backing up. If needed, use your horn to catch the attention of others.

When walking to/from your vehicle:

- ❖ If possible, during low light conditions (dawn, dusk, night) try to wear light colored clothing so that other motorists can see you easily
- ❖ Watch out for speed bumps and concrete parking blocks that may be covered by fresh snow or rain puddles – these could cause you to trip and fall
- ❖ During inclement weather, ice may not be obvious and you could lose your footing
- ❖ At night, avoid secluded areas to reduce the potential threat of muggings, robbery and the like.
- ❖ Have your keys out and ready so that you do not need to linger next to your vehicle (where you could be attacked)

When Leaving:

- ❖ Walk around your vehicle and check for damages, and check for discarded glass bottles or other materials that could damage your tires as you pull out of the spot
- ❖ Take time to clean away any ice or snow accumulations in the winter so that you can see clearly when driving out of the parking lot
- ❖ Watch for indications that other vehicles are about to leave (i.e. brake lights, exhaust, etc.)
- ❖ When backing out of a parking space, be mindful of vehicles and pedestrians moving behind you – if it is safe to do so, backing into a space should make it much easier to see cross traffic and pedestrians when you pull forward to leave

Parking Lot Dangers!

- Be seen by others
- Lookout for pedestrians & drivers who are in a hurry
- Park near lights, avoid trees & carts
- Avoid the need to back out into traffic
- Don't cut across the lot – follow lanes
- Be especially vigilant during holidays



Parking lot accidents account for more than 14% of automobile crash claims – Insurance Institute for Highway Safety