

## BACK TO BASICS: YOUR KEYS TO SAFE DRIVING



DRIVE SAFELY WORK WEEK: THURSDAY

# PARKING AND BACKING BASICS

Parking lot incidents are typically low-speed collisions, but they can still lead to expensive repair bills. More importantly, they can be fatal if a pedestrian—particularly a child—is involved. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), 20% of all reported vehicle crashes occur in parking lots. Since many parking lot collisions involve only property damage, many often go unreported, so the real number is most likely much higher. For fleets, parking lot crashes are one of the most commonly occurring types of incidents. And when you consider the types of places where teens are frequently driving to like school, shopping malls and movie theatres, it stands to reason that they spend a lot of time in parking lots. Safe parking and backing is an important basic for all driver groups to master.

## GET THE FACTS

- Every year at least 1,700 people are killed and another 841,000 are injured in non-traffic incidents.<sup>1</sup> 'Non-traffic' refers to anything that happens off of public roads or highways, generally in parking lots or driveways.
- All vehicles have blind zones—the area behind them that a person cannot see from the driver's seat. The blind zone is affected by the length of the vehicle and the height of the driver. Pickups, SUVs and minivans have larger blind zones than passenger cars.
- According to Kids and Cars (a non-profit child safety advocacy group) at least 50 children are backed over every week in the U.S.
- Backup cameras and sensors can be helpful aids for those vehicles with poor visibility.

<sup>1</sup> Not-in-Traffic Surveillance Report (NITS), 2007

### Setting Your Mirrors to Help You See the Big Picture

While all blind spots cannot be eliminated, properly positioned mirrors are the key to maximizing your field of vision. To set your mirrors, with the vehicle safely parked, sit in the normal driving position. Center the rearview mirror, and then adjust the left and right side-view mirrors until you can slightly see the edge of the rear of your vehicle in the mirror. This mirror adjustment will enable you to see adjoining traffic lanes, as well as hazards next to the vehicle. It also provides a reference to the position of your vehicle compared to other vehicles and hazards.\*

After adjusting your mirrors, you should always glance over your shoulder to check blind spots any time you turn, merge or change lanes.

\*There are various ways to set mirrors used even within the NETS membership and this is one way, but not necessarily the only way.



## GOT KIDS OR GRANDKIDS?

- It is estimated that backing over pedestrians causes 45% of non-traffic crash fatalities and 20% of non-traffic crash injuries to children.<sup>2</sup>
- In the U.S., at least 50 children are backed over every week. In 70% of these cases, a parent or close relative is behind the wheel.<sup>3</sup>
- Sport utility vehicles and trucks are involved in more backovers than cars.

### Tips for preventing backover incidents:

- Teach children not to play in or around cars and to move away from a vehicle when a driver gets in it or if the engine is started.
- Walk around and behind your vehicle prior to moving it.
- Roll down your windows while backing out of a driveway or parking space so you can hear what is happening outside of your vehicle.
- Know where your kids are. Make children move away from your vehicle to a place where they are in full view before moving the car.
- Be aware that steep inclines and large SUV's, vans and trucks add to the difficulty of seeing behind a vehicle.

<sup>2</sup> Safe Kids USA

<sup>3</sup> Kidsandcars.org

## TIPS FOR SAFE PARKING

**Back in, not out**—Where legal and where parking spaces are not angled, fleet safety experts agree it is safest to back into or pull through a parking space so your vehicle is facing out when it's time to exit.

**Get the full picture**—Having your mirrors properly adjusted for the best possible view is important for all driving maneuvers, but it is particularly so for safely backing into a parking space.

**Get it straight**—Once you've backed in, before exiting the vehicle, turn the wheel to straighten your tires so they are ready for you to drive out safely.

**Embrace the walk**—Pull-through spaces are more common in the outer areas of a parking lot. When possible and practical, take advantage of the ease of parking in a pull-through spot and walk the extra distance. Not only will your body benefit from the bonus physical activity, you'll be less likely to get a door ding.

**Approach slowly**—When pulling-through to a parking space, particularly if there is an SUV or van on either or both sides, go slowly and be alert for other drivers coming from the opposite side that may not see you and could be approaching the same spot.

**Exit with caution**—When exiting from a parking space, go slowly and be aware of pedestrians and other vehicles. Moving slowly will also give others more time to see you.

**We're all pedestrians**—Remember, the moment you exit your vehicle, you become a pedestrian. Especially in parking lots, keep your head up and alert to your surroundings.

### If you MUST back out:

- Complete a vehicle walk-around to check for children and other objects before backing out. Once the walk-around is complete and all is clear, make your exit promptly and cautiously as conditions may change.
- Some fleet programs recommend tapping the horn twice before backing to alert others of your intention.

