

## **Your Health and Safety Matters!**

### **Holiday Parking Lot Safety**

#### ***Parking Lots Are Riskier Than You Think***



More than 50,000 crashes occur in parking lots and garage structures annually, resulting in 500 or more deaths and more than 60,000 injuries. And, around the holidays, parking lots become even more dangerous.

Auto insurers report the number of claims spike on Black Friday and run above normal throughout the holiday shopping season. The number of incidents is probably higher than insurance claims indicate, as many fender-benders go unreported.



## ***So Many Distractions!***

Thousands of pedestrians end up with broken bones, tissue damage or even worse because of cell phone or other distractions in parking lots.

*In a National Safety Council public opinion poll, 66% of drivers nationwide said they would make phone calls while driving through parking lots.*

Respondents also said they would:

- Program GPS systems (63%)
- Text (56%)
- Use social media (52%)
- Send or receive emails (50%)
- Take photos or watch videos (49%)

Although parking in a lot is typically less complicated than it is on the street because the spaces are designed to be easy to enter and exit, parking lots present their own unique risks to drivers.

NSC found teens (59%) were more likely to engage in personal grooming than adults (53%) while driving in parking lots, but less likely to be on the phone (60% vs. 66%).

During the hectic holiday season, drivers and pedestrians also are likely to be distracted by extensive to-do lists and are hurriedly trying to get from one place to another.

Backing out – When a driver pulls “head in” into a parking space, they have to back out, creating blind spots that are harder to figure out because other vehicles are parked on either side. This makes it more difficult for a motorist to see if there’s an obstacle or pedestrian at the back.

## **Causes of Parking Lot Accidents**

Drivers entering a parking lot keep an eye on a vacant spot and often neglect to watch for other drivers and pedestrians who are on the move.

- Many drivers pull 'head in' to a parking spot after which they must back out. While backing out, blind zones created by vehicles parked alongside the spot obstruct the driver's vision.
- Traffic laws aren't enforceable in parking lots, which can create reckless driving and confusion.
- Parking lots are congested, accommodating a high amount of vehicular traffic and pedestrians.

### **Dangerous Parts of a Parking Lot**

- Places with low or dim lighting in parking lots are likelier sites for criminal activity, and the low visibility can also result in slips, trips and falls.
- Parts of a parking lot where snow or debris accumulates can prove dangerous to drivers and pedestrians alike.
- The exit of a parking lot can also be risky. Boom gates used by parking lots to restrict the movement of vehicles without paying the parking charges can injure drivers, passengers or pedestrians who are trying to move past it.

### **Tips For Staying Safe in a Parking Lot**

- 25 percent of all parking lot accidents are caused by vehicles backing up. It is advisable that you watch out for other drivers and pedestrians while doing so.
- Comply with the signs posted like stop signs or speed limit signs.
- Turn on headlights (during daytime too) to reduce the risk of crashing.
- Try to park farther away from the entrance, where traffic is less congested.

### ***Stay Alert!***

Safety isn't guaranteed just by driving slowly in parking lots. Following are some safety tips for driver's courtesy of the Oswego (IL) Police Department:

- Stay in lanes and avoid cutting across lots
- Drive slowly and use directional signals
- Anticipate the actions of other drivers

- Obey stop signs and no-parking signs
- When backing out, be mindful of vehicles and pedestrians
- Watch for small children and parents with baby strollers
- Buckle up. Accidents can happen anytime.
- Park in areas that are well-lit.
- Parking lot rules also apply to pedestrians. Refrain from walking in the middle of the lane, do not text while walking, and make use of marked crosswalks.

<https://www.nsc.org/road-safety/safety-topics/distracted-driving/parking-lot-safety>

<https://www.myparkingsign.com/blog/parking-lot-accidents/>

<https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/16449-parking-lot-safety>

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## **Blog:**

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### **Parking Lot Injuries Often Result of Distraction**



Parking lots are riskier than you think. Tens of thousands of crashes occur in parking lots and garage structures annually, resulting in hundreds of deaths and thousands of injuries. And, around the holidays, parking lots become even more dangerous.

#### **Key points**

- Factors such as distracted driving, speeding, more frequent turning and higher pedestrian count are among the reasons that these incidents occur.
- In addition to vehicles, parking lot surfaces can play a role in injuries and incidents

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## **Tapping into Technology**

NSC analysis of government data indicates that 9% of pedestrian deaths in parking lots result from backup incidents. Many vehicles today are equipped with [backup cameras](#), which provide a wide view behind a vehicle operating in reverse, but that view may not be clear if the camera lens becomes obstructed.

Three safety reminders:

- It's best to conduct a quick, 360-degree walk-around before backing, keeping an eye out for low-lying objects
- Don't rely completely on technology; look over your shoulder and use your mirrors as you back up
- When parking, pull through on arrival whenever possible and if it works with the flow of traffic

[Monitoring systems can alert drivers](#) of vehicles in blind spots. Typically, drivers are warned of another vehicle's presence via symbol, sound or vibration. These systems may not detect motorcycles, smaller objects or people, however.

## **Other Parking Lot Pitfalls**

Inadequate pavement striping, potholes or cracks, lack of signage, debris, poor lighting, puddles, and snow and ice also can lead to pedestrian injuries. Slips, trips and falls are common in parking lots, and falls in general are the [leading cause of death](#) for older adults.

Choosing the right parking spot can go a long way toward deterring theft and crime. Consumer Reports provides some [simple safety rules](#):

- Pick spots that are well-lit and close to stores where you will be shopping
- Lock your doors
- Store purchases in places that are out of sight (in the trunk or tucked under dark-colored blankets)

Large parking lots, such as those found at shopping malls, are considered most vulnerable to crime, according to the Urban Institute Justice Policy Center. One way for consumers to [steer clear of trouble](#) is to pick a lot where pedestrian traffic is restricted and video surveillance equipment is used to monitor the facility.

<https://www.nsc.org/road/safety-topics/distracted-driving/parking-lot-safety>

## **BLOG:**

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### **Do's and Don'ts to Prevent Parking Lot Accidents**

#### ***Do's:***

- Do choose a parking space that's far away from the entrance or exit. By doing so, you're less exposed to pedestrian and vehicle traffic.
- Do select a well-lit area. Properly illuminated surroundings let you clearly see the space around your car, especially at night.

#### ***Don'ts:***

- Don't remove seat belts until you're safely parked. Accidents can happen anytime, so it's best to be prepared.
- Don't ignore car park rules. Traffic laws may not exist in all parking areas, but all of them have regulations for pedestrian and driver

safety in the form of speed limit and stop signs and marked crosswalks.



The hectic holiday shopping season means parking lots full of people and safety hazards and the heightened possibility of theft. But thieves aren't just looking to steal newly-bought Christmas gifts, they're also after your identity.

### **Parking Lot Safety**

- Eliminate distractions. Turn off and stow cell phones. Set up navigation and GPS devices before starting to drive.
- Watch for pedestrians. Remain cautious of pedestrians on crosswalks and moving in-between and behind cars. Be alert especially for children who are not always paying attention.
- Learn to play the outfield. Outlying areas have more spaces, lighter traffic and a lower risk of collision.
- Don't put yourself in a tight spot. Avoid parking between a pair of tall SUVs, minivans or pickups where it might be hard to back out of the space. If you can't see well enough to back out safely, get help from one of your passengers.

- Buckle up. Even a low-speed collision can result in injuries. Make sure that everyone is strapped in a seat belt or child car seat while the car is in motion, even if it's just a short trip to another part of the parking lot.

## **Personal Safety**

AAA cautions that crowded shopping malls, streets and parking lots can provide ample opportunity for theft during the holiday season.

- Protect your presents by stowing shopping bags in the trunk. A thief can steal your gifts in a matter of seconds, so eliminate the temptation by keeping them out of sight.
- Keep a grip on your valuables. Make sure your purse is secure in your hand, along with any valuables you may have just bought. Thieves are always looking for an easy “snatch and grab.”
- Know who is around. Don't be caught off guard. Keep an eye on what and who may be around you. If someone approaches your vehicle don't be rude, but also do not roll down a window or open a door to a stranger.

## **Keeping Your Identity Safe**

To safeguard your personal information as you shop this season, AAA Financial Services offers these tips:

- Use cash or credit only. Compromised debit information puts your money at risk because the card is directly linked to your bank account. Credit cards offer greater consumer protection and less liability than your bank card.
- Clean out your wallet. Don't carry excess credit cards or your Social Security card with you. For the cards you do carry, keep a copy of all account numbers and phone numbers in safe place at home.
- Search before you swipe. Tech-savvy thieves use inconspicuous tools such as skimming devices to steal your card information at ATMs, gas pumps and other pay terminals. Don't use swipe devices that look out of place. Be sure to shield your PIN number as you punch it in or ask the cashier to run your card through the register.

## **Shoppers searching for deals online are urged to exercise cyber safety:**

- Shop sites you trust. Stick with online retailers you recognize and make sure you are at their correct site.
- Shop secure. Before submitting credit card information, make sure the website is secure by looking for “https://” instead of “http://” in front of the web address.
- Stay off public Wi-Fi. Never use public wireless hotspots to do online shopping, banking or any activity that requires passwords or personal information.

[www.AAA.com](http://www.AAA.com)

