

Protecting Our Parishes, Missions, and Schools

Parking Lot – What Is the Risk?

Campus Safety Committees and accidents/injury claims data show that an area of concern on campus is parking lots. Whether you are walking in the parking lot or driving your car, this is a high-risk exposure area for you. Oftentimes, students or others driving in the parking lot are distracted, not paying attention to their driving. It may be that they are looking for a parking spot, backing out of a parking stall, talking on a cell phone, adjusting the radio or performing other activities can lead to distracting the driver causing a risk to pedestrians or other motorists.

So let's review some issue that you should consider to address parking lot risk exposures.

Walking in Parking Lot

- A car pulling out of a parking stall or a motorist speeding ahead to get that difficult parking spot puts pedestrians and other motorists at risk.

Recommend: Pay close attention to the surrounding area at all times to avoid distracted drivers. It is important that you maintain your alertness and continue to scan the area, looking forward and around you to forecast for potential problems. Watch the driver to determine what he or she is doing and where their vision is fixating.

- Parking lot walking surfaces may have speed bumps, parking bumpers, pot holes, utilities covers, storm drainage grates, standing water, or other surface elevation changes that may lead to a trip and fall.



Recommend: Preventing trip and falls start with identifying where these hazards exist, recognizing them and walking around or away from these exposures. Problems need to be reported to Campus Security or Plant Maintenance. Recognition and avoidance is the key to avoid injury.

- Is it important when walking in a parking lot, that you do not carry heavy or bulky items that may block your vision or add excessive weight to your lower back when carrying the load a long distance. Carrying of heavy loads at long distances may lead to an unnecessary injury to your back.

Recommend: It is recommended that you drop off the materials at the unloading areas or front door or use hand carts that can fold up into your vehicle trunk to assist you in carrying the load. Fold-up handcarts are inexpensive and save you from a back injury.

- When using parking lots at night, the lighting may be inadequate or have areas that promote shadows, causing difficulty in seeing the parking stalls or changes in surface elevation.

Recommend: Where parking stall bumpers exist, it is important that you avoid shortcuts and use the designated walkways or the traffic aisles versus attempting to step over the parking stops. Pay close attention by visually identifying areas such as storm grates, potholes, standing water (puddles), etc.



Driving in Parking Lot

- Parking lots have high traffic in a congested area; therefore, when a car is pulling out of the parking stall or a motorist is speeding ahead to get that difficult parking spot, it can place other motorists at risk of a collision.

Recommend: Drivers should continually scan and drive at reduced speeds, generally less than 15 miles per hour in a parking lot. Scanning the area allows you to see the other drivers' actions in advance and the reduced speed gives you time to take evasive action to avoid a collision before you get to the "point of no return." Remember, begin braking early; do not assume the other drivers see you.

- When backing out of a parking stall, you have limited visibility to see oncoming or approaching traffic.

Recommend: To avoid backing up collisions, (especially from speeding or distracted motorist), pull out slowly, sound horn and watch all directions before completely pulling out of parking stall. Some drivers back up in a parking lot to allow for easy pulling out of a parking stall, but oftentimes this may not be practical.

- In a parking lot, there are clearly marked traffic signs or traffic stop lines on a roadway, in which inexperienced drivers (students) do not recognize or understand the need to stop and yield the right of way, which leads to accidents. In many cases, they misjudge the speed of a traveling vehicle (due to inexperience) and pull out in front of oncoming traffic.

Recommend: Accident Prevention starts by knowing where these dangerous intersection encounters are located on campus. When you approach these areas, yield the right-of-way to inexperienced drivers, use horn and maintain eye contact with other drivers to understand where the driver's attention is.

- Operating a golf cart or utility cart in parking lots can increase your chances of being involved in a vehicle accident. Golf carts are smaller and can be difficult to see or recognize by other drivers. Vehicles and golf carts are not normally occupying the same roadway.

Recommend: Drive golf carts and utility vehicles with the thought that a motorist cannot easily see you and that vehicle has the right-of-way. Avoid driving carts in the parking lot during peak traffic time; use other roadways that are not often used by vehicles where applicable. Sound the horn and color code or use beacon lights to draw the attention of the golf cart to the vehicle driver.

Parking Lot Safety starts with being aware of your surroundings, not being distracted when walking or driving, and recognizing potential problems in advance to avoid them.

