



Get the Facts: Parking lots – Safety in the asphalt jungle

In a Nutshell

You may not be speeding, but 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.

What should I know about staying safe in parking lots?

It's all about paying attention and maintaining your cool to keep yourself, your passengers and your vehicle safe. Many newer vehicles include backup cameras and warning systems to enhance safety, but additional personal scans of your surroundings is essential.

Avoiding scrapes – or worse – in parking lots

- Be alert and slow down. Many parking lot collisions occur when vehicles cut across a parking area, often to avoid traffic signals on main roads. Excessive speed is also an issue.
- Watch out for the parking place hunters. They're so focused on the perfect spot, they're not paying attention to driving conditions. Avoid accidents and frustration by taking the first available spot. If you're physically able, the walk will do you good.
- Stay inside the lines. The most common collisions occur when backing out. If possible, back into your space. When you back out of a parking space, look over your shoulder in addition to consulting mirrors and your backup camera.
- Signal your turns to indicate your intent in a parking lot as you would on the road.
- Follow the rules of the lot. That includes adhering to posted speeds, stop signs and directional arrows. Watch out for speed bump that are common parking lot fixtures.
- Be aware of the parking lot surface. Uneven pavement or potholes can cause damage to vehicles as well as injuries to pedestrians.
- Parking ramps pose additional challenges. Always take your ticket with you to deter vehicle thieves.

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





- When exiting a parking ramp, be on the lookout for any traffic entering the exit lane or ramp from other parking levels. Also, watch for indications that a vehicle is preparing to vacate a parking spot: brake lights, back-up lights, exhaust and driver body language.
- Park in a well-lit section of a lot or ramp, in an area that is not isolated. If possible, avoid shrubs, walls or signs; they can obstruct your vision when exiting and also provide potential hiding places for assailants.
- Secure valuables in the trunk and activate any security devices. Lock all doors and roll up windows.
- If you are uncomfortable walking to your vehicle after dark or alone, don't hesitate to ask the lot management for an escort. Many lots and ramps provide this service.
- Keep children safe. Reinforce rules about looking for traffic and crossing streets. Seek designated loading zones or less busy areas to drop passengers off, if possible

Sources: National Safety Council
The National Institute of Justice
Lexington Herald-Leader
The Hartford Insurance Company

