

PUBLIC SAFETY BULLETIN: 12 Important Tips for Parking Lot Safety

You know you need to stay alert on the road, but what happens when you are in a parking lot? Many drivers inadvertently let their guard down in parking lots. The low speeds can make a parking lot seem safer than the open road, but accidents happen frequently in parking lots and garages. Keep yourself, other drivers and pedestrians safe when you are in a parking facility by following these 12 tips for parking lot safety.



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1. Stay Off of Technology

It's easy to get distracted by technology like your cellphone, GPS or infotainment system when driving in a parking lot. Play it safe and set the route to your next destination and get your favorite songs playing before you get on the road. You might be tempted to roll through the parking lot while scrolling on your phone, but this causes you to lose focus on the area around you. Be sure to set up all of your technology needs – like GPS directions or texting a friend to let them know you are on your way – before putting the car in gear.

2. Pick a Well-Lit Area

When parking at night, look for a parking area and space that is well-lit. Lights help deter criminals from trying to break into your car while you are away. A well-lit area also helps keep you safe if someone tries to hide near your car when

you return. Lighting does not just keep you safe from thieves; a lot of light from a streetlight or parking lot lamps makes it easier to see any objects or hazards around your car. If an object falls off another vehicle and lands behind your car, you are more likely to notice it with plenty of light.

3. Lock Your Car

Locking your car is one of the easiest ways to help prevent theft when you are parked in a lot. Take the time to roll up your windows and make sure you have your keys before exiting your vehicle. You should also consider locking your car when you get back in it as you prepare to leave. Locking the doors while you set up your technology helps keep you safe from potential car thieves or other criminals.

4. Look Both Ways

You know you need to look both ways before crossing a road as a

pedestrian, and you should follow these same rules as a driver in a parking lot. You might want to keep even more of a lookout when in the driver's seat in a parking lot. Many parking lots have intersections without stop signs or crosswalks which means you need to be on high alert for oncoming traffic or pedestrians.

5. Stay in the Lanes

Use the parking lot or garage aisles to get to your preferred parking space. Do not cut across aisles or through spaces to shorten the drive. It's much more difficult for other drivers or pedestrians to know where you are going if you do not stay in the driving areas. Your risk of an accident is also higher if both you and another driver are cutting lanes. Staying in the designated driving aisles reduces the risk of an accident or fender bender and keeps you safe.



6. Walk Around Your Car Before Leaving

It's a good idea to walk around your car before pulling out of a parking lot as:

- You will be able to see any debris or objects in the way of your tires.
- You can look for scratches, dents or dings left by others in the lot.
- You can double-check that all doors and latches are closed before leaving.

If you are in an area where you do not feel safe walking around outside of your car, skip a full inspection and do a quick check for anything in the way of your tires that could harm your vehicle or make it difficult to leave the lot.

7. Pull Through if Possible

Backing out of a parking spot leaves you with blind spots that make it difficult to see pedestrians or other cars. Try to pull through the spot in front of you when parking to avoid the need to back up when you leave. By pulling through to the next spot, you can simply continue driving forward when it's time to leave. This gives you more visibility to look for hazards on the road.

8. Keep Valuables Out of Sight

Place valuables or items likely to be stolen from your vehicle in an unseen area of your vehicle. Your trunk is the perfect place to store large items or valuables if you have a sedan. SUV, van or pickup-truck drivers may want to use under-seat storage or invest in dark-colored blankets that match the interior of your vehicle. You can use the blankets to cover your valuables when you leave your car in a parking lot.

9. Watch Out for Pedestrians

Parking lots are often full of people walking on the road as they make their way to and from their cars. With so many pedestrians, it's more important than usual to pay attention to people in the roadway. Follow defensive driving tactics to stay alert and on the lookout for pedestrians not paying attention. Many people are looking at their phones, listening to music through headphones or dealing with young children when they are in a parking lot and may not be paying attention to cars in the aisles.

10. Slow Down

You probably slow down a lot when you enter a parking facility, but you may need to go even slower. When changing from road driving speeds to parking lot speeds, it's easy to think you are slowing down enough because of the difference in speeds. After slowing down to enter a parking lot, consider tapping the brakes or taking your foot off the gas again to reduce your speed even more.

11. Follow Directions

Stop signs, yield signs and directional arrows are placed in parking lots to make the flow of traffic safer for drivers and pedestrians alike. Watch out for road signs in the parking lot and follow the directions. Not only will you help keep the parking lot traffic moving, but you also will be less likely to be involved in an accident.

12. Know What to Do in an Accident

No matter how well you follow directions, watch for other cars or pay attention in a parking lot, there is always a chance you will be in an accident. Make sure you know what to do in a parking lot accident before you have to deal with the stress of a collision. Even at low speeds, parking lot accidents can cause a lot of damage. Check that your car insurance is up to date and that you have the coverage you need in case of an accident.

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