

# Why reverse parking is safer

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Research shows that parking lots are hazardous places. Tight corners, crowded lanes and distracted drivers make a dangerous combination. Reverse parking can help.

Drivers should be even more vigilant of their surroundings while operating a vehicle in a parking lot. In this blog, we dispel common parking myths and provide tactics for safer driving in parking lots and garages.

## **Parking lot collisions are the top cause of fleet accidents**

What is the number one type of collision for fleets? Another vehicle hitting a parked fleet vehicle was the top type of fleet accident in 2018, as reported by [Automotive Fleet](#).

Statistics from the National Safety Council reveal that:

- Each year, there are more than 50,000 collisions in parking lots and garages.

- Parking lot and garage structure collisions lead to over 500 fatalities and more than 60,000 injuries.
- Insurance claims for collisions [increase significantly](#) on Black Friday (the peak shopping day in the U.S.).

Lower speeds limits in parking lots does not mean lower risk. Distracted driving occurs also in parking lots, as well as on the road. The [National Safety Council](#) conducted a public opinion poll which revealed that 66% of U.S. drivers would make a phone call while driving in a parking lot, 56% would text, and 29% would even take photos or videos.

**See also:** [Distracted driving facts: common causes and solutions](#)

## **Parking safety tips**

The following strategies for safe parking have been compiled from industry sites and insurance providers.

- Pay attention to signage and obey parking lot speeding limits, stop signs and no-parking signs
- Scan the area and look out for pedestrians
- Drive slowly
- Do not multitask, including talking on a phone, texting, eating, or smoking while driving
- Whenever possible, reverse park into the parking space

As well, for your own safety, keep your seat belt on until the car is parked. Planning ahead so that you aren't in a rush will allow more time for parking safely.

## **Reverse parking could save a life**

Reverse parking means backing into a space so you can drive forward out of the space after. It can be a simple way to reduce the risk of collisions.

Backing out a space unfortunately leads to many fatalities. In a 2018 study of [non-traffic motor vehicle crashes](#) in 2015, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) found that 12,000 vehicle nonoccupants (eg. pedestrians or cyclists) were injured by vehicles backing up, and 284 were killed. This class of crashes, non-traffic, was limited to incidents occurring outside public trafficways, typically driveways and parking facilities.

Children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable to being injured or killed in backover collisions. Non-profit organization [Kids & Cars](#) reported that 25 children in the U.S. were killed in 2019 due to backover incidents alone.

In a move to change these numbers, NHTSA previously ruled that all new vehicles under 10,000 pounds (including passenger vehicles, buses and trucks) had to be equipped with [rear visibility technology](#). To further promote safety, late last year, NHTSA issued a [notice of proposed rulemaking](#) to seek public input on replacing mirrors on heavy trucks and cars with camera-based, rear-visibility systems.

## **Monitoring reverse parking with telematics**

Many companies have incorporated reverse parking into their corporate safety policies. Not only can this improve driver and pedestrian safety, but it can also help save costs.

With telematics, companies can monitor whether their drivers are following company rules. In [MyGeotab](#), for example, fleet managers can set up a safety rule for backing up when leaving. This rule identifies drivers who back out their vehicles when leaving a location. The system can send a notification for when the rule is broken, either by email, popup, beep warning, or text message.

Fleet managers can use these insights to help drivers define their strengths and weaknesses, and to set up a customized [driver coaching](#) program if necessary.

## **Reverse parking myths**

### **Myth #1: Reverse parking disrupts traffic more than forward parking**

While reverse parking may disrupt traffic flow, the alternative — backing out of a parking space — is also disruptive and hazardous. It is much better to enter the flow of oncoming traffic with the front of your vehicle, than to back into it.

## **Myth #2: Reverse parking is less safe**

The purpose of reverse parking is to make the environment safer when the driver leaves the parking space. When leaving the parking space, the driver is able to see the surroundings more clearly.

## **Additional findings: Parking and backing collisions**

### **IIHS, Rear Crash Prevention Technology**

It is inevitable that at some point you will need to back up into a tight parking lot where the risk of collision is quite high. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) and Highway Loss Data Institute (HDLI) have conducted research to narrow down the top rear autobrake systems to mitigate this risk. [To learn more, visit the IIHS site.](#)

### **NHTSA, Backover Prevention Tips**

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has established a list of tips to prevent backover incidents involving children. Something as simple as walking around your vehicle and checking the area before backing up can save a child's life. Check out general [pedestrian safety tips](#) here.

### **AAA, Safe Parking Strategies**

AAA advises drivers to back into parking spots or pull-through, and not fully rely on rear-view or traffic alert technology in vehicles which have their limitations. AAA warns that reversing out a space is a risky behavior as you are putting pedestrians at risk. [Read the article at Automotive Fleet.](#)

## **OSHA, Preventing Backovers**

Read about the dangers of reversing industrial vehicles (such as dump trucks or tractor trailers) from the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Safety recommendations include using a spotter, proximity detection devices, and creating internal traffic control plans on work sites. Read the [full article here](#).

### **Conclusion**

Even if injury is avoided, a fender-bender in a parking lot can result in lost time and money due to out-of-service vehicles, filing insurance claims and vehicle repair costs. Businesses have great incentive to monitor parking closely to increase [fleet safety](#) and reduce fleet costs.

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