

REVERSE PARKING IS SAFER

According to the National Safety Council, one out of four vehicle crashes can be blamed on poor backing techniques. Backing crashes cause up to 500 deaths and 15,000 injuries per year. This should not be acceptable to anyone.

An average driver drives around 15,000 miles annually; how many miles do you think the average driver drives in reverse? Figures vary on this, but a ballpark guess might result in perhaps 10 miles, or the distance between Saranac Lake and Lake Placid. If we back out of a 50-foot driveway three times per day, this would result in 10 miles/year. Backing out of parking spaces in parking lots might add another five miles at the rate of four times per day and 20 feet each time. So an average driver might back up seven times per day and around 15 miles total per year, or slightly farther than Malone to Chateaugay, resulting in 1/10 of one percent of your total mileage.

Yet, with this small amount of backing distance and frequency, how come statistics show backing crashes make up anywhere from 10-25 percent of all crashes? The answer is likely because we are not very proficient at backing, and we fail miserably at checking to see what is behind our vehicles before backing.

Driver safety does not stop in the parking lot. In fact, drivers should be even more vigilant of their surroundings while operating their vehicle in a parking lot. Following parking safety strategies and reverse parking into your space could potentially save lives, injuries, and damage to vehicles. Research shows that parking lots are hazardous places. Parking lot crashes are the most common cause of fender benders.

Parking in reverse is a simple way to reduce the risk of backing crashes. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that “267 people are killed and 15,000 injured each year by drivers who back into them, usually in driveways or parking lots.” Unfortunately, most often it is children and elderly people who are killed in back-over crashes. **By reverse parking, you avoid backing out blindly into oncoming traffic or into the path of pedestrians.**

Many companies have now made it a point to incorporate reverse parking into their corporate culture policies. This not only improves driver safety but it can also improve their bottom line. When I speak to the local Driver Education classes I refer to this as “First Move Forward”, meaning when you get back to your vehicle, the first move is forward, not backing out of a parking spot into traffic or pedestrians.

Drivers should think in advance and not put themselves into unnecessary backing situations. So, you say it’s as dangerous to back into a parking place as backing out; not really. When reverse parking, a driver is going into a known space with no vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Then, when leaving the parking space, the driver is able to see the surroundings more clearly. However, when you back out of a parking space, you are backing into unknown and changing traffic. A driver’s view is further hindered by the cars parked next to it. Safe backing requires practice – lots of it. Try going to a vacant area of a parking lot and practice. Soon you will be proficient.