THE ULTIMATE TRAINING GUIDE TO PREVENTING PARKING LOT COLLISIONS

Parking Lots: More Dangerous than the Open Road?

Safety professionals spend a lot of time focused on roadway collisions, and for good reason: higher speeds can mean more injuries, higher costs and greater liability.

But two-thirds of fleet collisions happen in a parking lot. Of those, most involve a fixed or stationary object rather than another person or moving vehicle. The sheer number of these smaller collisions means you can't afford to overlook them in your training programs.

The good news is that parking lot crashes are almost always 100% preventable. A small investment in training now can pay dividends for the duration of a driver's employment with your company.

Parking Lot Collisions — What's the Big Deal?

The Hidden Costs of "Small" Collisions

Most parking lot crashes are minor — a scratched door, a dented bumper. If they're just scratches and dings, what's the big deal?

Damage to the truck might be minimal, but even minor collisions have plenty of other direct and indirect costs. The cost of vehicle repairs, property damage, delivery delays and unhappy customers can add up quickly.

Direct Costs of Parking Lot Collisions

The direct costs of parking lot collisions are reasonably straightforward and typically include:

- Cost to repair the vehicle or other object
- Cost to repair the truck
- Cost of a rental vehicle

Most parking lot collisions involve other vehicles, which are expensive to repair. When you add up the costs to repair body damage, parts and paint, even a minor collision can easily cost $2,500. And that's before we even get to the cost of the rental car!

If a driver hits a gas pump or transformer, it gets even more expensive. Direct costs for these crashes can easily be in the tens of thousands of dollars or more!

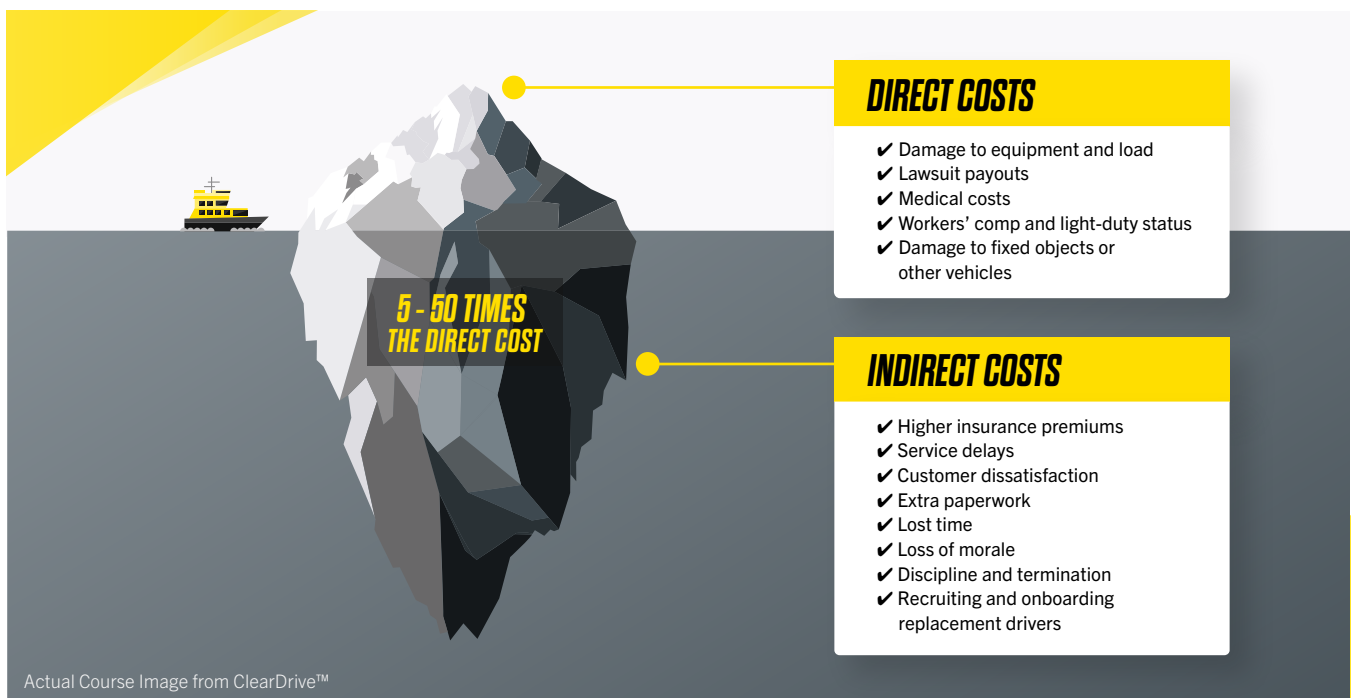# THE ULTIMATE TRAINING GUIDE TO PREVENTING PARKING LOT COLLISIONS

INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGIES

The Iceberg of Safety Costs

Safety directors often talk about the "iceberg of safety costs." The direct costs of a parking lot crash are easy to see, but they're just the tip of the iceberg. Indirect costs are hidden beneath the waterline, and they're often significant. These indirect costs can easily eclipse the direct costs by 5x or more.

Here are just a few examples of the indirect costs of parking lot collisions:

▶ **Termination and onboarding** — If the accident is serious enough to justify termination, you're looking at a huge investment of time and money to replace the driver. It can cost $5,000 to find and onboard a new driver.

▶ **Injuries, medical bills and lawsuits** — When plaintiff lawyers get greedy, a collision that happened at less than 2 mph could rack up thousands upon thousands of dollars over the following weeks and months.

▶ **Service delays** — After a collision, scheduled deliveries and pickups will be delayed, impacting customer service. Your team may even have to provide additional, uncompensated service to keep customers happy.

▶ **Extra operating costs** — You may need to deploy extra resources to offset any service delays caused by the collision. Overtime, additional fuel, mileage, and lost product are rarely counted in the cost of collisions, but they add up quickly.

▶ **Opportunity costs** — The time you spend dealing with the aftermath of a crash adds up, taking you away from parts of your job that could prevent the problems, rather than react to the problem.

▶ **DOT reportable crashes** — Many parking lot accidents — especially those involving heavier box trucks, passenger vehicles, and hazmat transporters — have the potential to be classified as a "reportable collision" by DOT. If a fleet has enough of these incidents, you can end up in "alert" status with the FMCSA. This status may force you to suddenly redirect your internal resources, staff and budgets to deal with compliance issues.

When you factor in all the costs of parking lot collisions, it's easy to see how a little training on the front end can save you many thousands of dollars, not to mention a few headaches, down the line.

5 - 50 TIMES THE DIRECT COST

DIRECT COSTS
- ✔ Damage to equipment and load
- ✔ Lawsuit payouts
- ✔ Medical costs
- ✔ Workers' comp and light-duty status
- ✔ Damage to fixed objects or other vehicles

INDIRECT COSTS
- ✔ Higher insurance premiums
- ✔ Service delays
- ✔ Customer dissatisfaction
- ✔ Extra paperwork
- ✔ Lost time
- ✔ Loss of morale
- ✔ Discipline and termination
- ✔ Recruiting and onboarding replacement drivers

Actual Course Image from ClearDrive™

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INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGIES

Why Drivers Crash

The Root Causes: Rushing and Distraction

Actual Course Image from ClearDrive™

ClearDrive online driver training deals with driver distractions in several lessons.

Reduce Distractions with Training and Reminders

As a safety manager, how can you help your drivers combat the pressure? First, train them. Then, remind them.

Assign distracted driving training to every new driver as part of their onboarding. Make sure they understand the hazards of texting, talking on the phone, fiddling with the stereo, eating and drinking, doing paperwork or even chatting with a colleague when they should be focused on driving.

In addition to formal training, it's important to remind drivers on an ongoing basis about the importance of focusing and finishing a task before moving onto the next one. For example, you could email weekly safety reminders or post them on your company's driver portal.

In the words of one wise driver manager, "I ask you to do a lot, but I demand you do just one thing at a time."

ClearDrive Courses on Driver Distraction

▶ Driver Distraction

▶ Backing and Docking

▶ Backing and Docking Enhanced

▶ Avoiding Fixed Objects

It's so frustrating when your driver hits an object in plain sight. How can a driver hit something that's both clearly visible and not moving? Parking lot crashes are usually caused by inattention, rushing or a combination of both.

Commercial fleet drivers are under a lot of pressure, which can lead them to feel rushed and distracted. Some of the more common challenges facing drivers include:

▶ Tight schedules and pressure to move quickly between job sites

▶ Narrow and overlapping delivery windows

▶ 30-minute call-ahead notifications to customers

▶ Preferred customer time windows

Add in the same issues every human feels — bad traffic, a sick kid, tough financial situations, an annoying neighbor — and it's easy to understand why drivers get distracted.

COMMON CAUSES OF DISTRACTED DRIVING

✔ Texting

✔ Talking on the phone

✔ Adjusting the stereo

✔ Eating and drinking

✔ Doing paperwork

✔ Chatting with colleagues

Fixed Object Collisions

Fixed Object Collisions (aka 30% of Your Fleet's Annual Collisions)

A fixed object collision typically refers to collisions where the vehicle was in drive and moving forward (not backing up) when it hit a fixed object, such as pole or awning, or a stationary object like another vehicle.

Despite the slow speeds in a parking lot, vehicles are big and heavy enough to cause significant damage to anything they hit. Forward-moving fixed and stationary object crashes can account for 30% or more of a fleet's total annual collisions.

Train Drivers to Avoid Fixed Objects

Help drivers avoid fixed and stationary object collisions by training them to:

▶ Approach slowly

▶ Scan the area you are approaching, including up

▶ Follow the GOALden rule: Get out and look!

Make sure drivers know the company expects them to re-inspect their surroundings as often as needed. Low parking lot speeds make it easy to stop, activate the truck's flashers, and hop out for a quick visual scan before making a tight maneuver or pulling under an awning.

If drivers feel too rushed to put this into practice, remind them that they'll finish faster if they get it right the first time. Nothing slows a driver down like hitting a pole.

TWO TYPES OF FIXED OBJECT COLLISIONS

✔ Stationary objects: other vehicles, rolling dumpsters or trailers

✔ Fixed objects: poles, awnings, transformers or buildings

TRAINING TIP: MAKE CONE DRILLS IMPOSSIBLE

When practicing parking with cones, intentionally make it impossible by just a foot or so. See if your driver will tell you it's too small, or will try to force it. They should never assume they can fit into a spot.

Ban Trucks from Busy Lots

It's a good practice to ban trucks from unusually busy or congested areas when possible. For example, if you can keep your drivers out of busy fueling stations and tight parking lots, you'll avoid a lot of incidents.

When you know an area will be busy during a time frame, work with the store manager to avoid your delivery windows during that time.

A Director of Safety for a large private fleet reduced parking lot collisions by over 50% per year, simply by banning drivers from using a particular fuel station.

SAFETY TIP: CREATE THE CONDITIONS FOR SAFER DRIVING

We have all seen this: it's 7:30am and a local fueling station near a warehouse district is packed with trucks and vans getting fuel and grabbing breakfast. It looks like a beehive. One safety director implemented a policy that prohibited drivers from using a particular local fueling station because of the hazards and accidents associated with the location. The policy alone reduced the company's annual parking lot collisions by more than 50%.

Backing Collisions

Backing Crashes: More Common Than You Think

Backing collisions happen when a driver hits a fixed or stationary object while backing up. These collisions are always considered 100% preventable. Most backing accidents will occur within or in the immediate area of a parking lot.

Like fixed object collisions, they account for about 30% of a fleet's annual collisions. Between fixed object and backing collisions, roughly 60% of commercial fleet crashes in a given year occur in parking lots. Does your training reflect this?

TOP 3 BACKING COLLISIONS

1. Other vehicles

2. Narrow objects like poles

3. Low awnings and signs

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Common Backing Crashes

While we classify backing crashes separately from fixed object collisions, they can and often do involve fixed or stationary objects. The most common backing collisions involve:

1. Other parked vehicles
2. Narrow objects like poles that can be difficult to see
3. Low-clearance awnings that get torn off buildings when van or truck drivers misjudge their height or simply don't look for them

Train Drivers to Avoid Backing Crashes

The best defense against backing collisions is training. Teach your drivers techniques for avoiding the need to back at all. This may require scouting a delivery area or talking to the manager of the facility beforehand. Of course, depending on your cargo or the type of facility, this is not always possible.

When backing is necessary, train drivers to be aware of their surroundings and know what is behind them. Remember the GOALden rule of backing: "Get Out And Look!"

Backing with a Spotter

Many commercial fleets deliver products that require a driver and a helper or team driver. Despite the addition of a second person, backing collisions still remain incredibly common.

To help prevent these crashes, make training on how to back with a spotter part of a road test. You should require the driver and helper to properly demonstrate backing with a spotter as part of a safety meeting. Ask your experienced teams of drivers and spotters for ideas about "close calls" and "tricky situations."

Support this practice with a strong and actionable policy that holds both the driver and spotter accountable for a backing collision. If the truck is backing, the helper or team driver needs to be out of the truck and spotting the driver as he backs. Additionally, it's never a bad idea for the driver to also "Get Out And Look."

ClearDrive has a training course for sedans and medium-duty trucks about avoiding fixed objects. The 30-minute course covers backing, spotters, getting out and looking, distractions, and several other common situations.

LESS COMMON BACKING COLLISIONS

Talking to safety directors, we've heard a few doozies. One driver backed into the transformer for a huge regional mall, shutting it down for a Saturday during the Christmas shopping season. Another driver caught an awning on the front of a church and pulled down the entire brick facade.

Actual Course Image from ClearDrive™

ClearDrive has a training lesson for medium-duty trucks and sedans about avoiding fixed objects. The 30-minute course covers backing, spotters, G.O.A.L., distractions and several other common situations.

Backing Technology for Trucks

Technology isn't a cure-all, but there is evidence that back-up cameras can help reduce backing collisions.

As with any new tool, training with the devices is absolutely essential. These items should not be considered or treated as "plug and play devices," no matter what the sales person tells you. Even the best back-up cameras distort the image behind the vehicle to some degree. They should only be used in conjunction with good backing techniques.

Backing sensors, usually installed in the rear bumper, are another potential technology solution. These devices are almost always used in conjunction with a back-up camera, so there isn't a reliable amount of data on whether they can reduce crashes independently. Again, they're no replacement for good backing techniques.

Anecdotally, safety directors have told us the sensors can have a difficult time detecting thin, cylindrical objects like poles, and may not detect soft objects (people) at all. Talk to your sales rep and ask for multiple demonstrations — you will find excellent products on the market.

Entering and Exiting Collisions

Entry and Exit Collisions Are Extremely Costly

Collisions that occur when a driver is entering or exiting a parking lot can be extremely costly. These collisions are more likely to be broadside collisions, which carry a high risk of injury. Injury costs can quickly outweigh the damage costs to vehicles, towing bills and rental vehicles.

A high percentage of these T-bone accidents have the potential to be classified as a "reportable collision" by DOT, especially if they involve heavier box trucks, passenger vehicles, and hazmat transporters. If a fleet has enough of these incidents, you can end up in "alert" status with the FMCSA. This status may force you to suddenly redirect your internal resources, manpower and budgets to deal with compliance issues. And you will likely need to rapidly deploy training and education campaigns that interrupt the otherwise smooth flow of your business.

Actual Course Image from ClearDrive™

75% of all turning collisions involve left turns. ClearDrive's courses on parking lot and intersection safety advise drivers to avoid left turns whenever possible.

75% of Turn Accidents Involve a Left Turn

Entering and exiting parking lots present lots of hazards: turning into or out of traffic, clipping a sign or other fixed object, impatient drivers behind the truck, and squeezing the truck into areas primarily designed for passenger vehicle traffic.

Research shows that 75% of all turning collisions are left turns. They will obviously result in your driver being cited for failure to yield. More importantly, these collisions have a much higher incidence of causing a tow-away or injury.

You can usually narrow down the cause to one of two reasons: driver inattention or obstructed visibility. Regardless of the reason, drivers will sum it up with, "I didn't see anyone coming."

Reduce Risk with Right Turns

Whenever possible, train drivers to take right turns when entering and exiting parking lots. Right turns expose the driver to less traffic and therefore reduce the risk of a crash. This is especially important for box trucks, but it's always a good practice for sedans and van drivers, too.

Right turns aren't risk-free, however. Even at a very low speed, a box truck might still need more than half of the driveway to complete the turn. This is a particularly hazardous point, especially if there is oncoming traffic trying to exit the parking lot. In these situations, train drivers to have their head on a swivel and use their mirrors.

The vehicle might also need to nearly come to a complete stop before making a right turn, which increases the risk of getting rear-ended. Safety committees and safety managers often classify these accidents as non-preventable. However, you can often trace them back to rapid deceleration. If you have vehicle telematics, be sure to use the data to determine the actual root cause.

TOP HAZARDS OF PARKING LOT INTERSECTIONS

✔ Oncoming traffic

✔ Fixed objects

✔ Impatient drivers

✔ Managing tight spaces

More Tips to Avoid Collisions Around a Parking Lot

▸ **Partner with operations and routing.** A great way to avoid collisions entering or exiting a parking lot is to partner with operations and routing. Ask them to make every effort to route vehicles in a manner to minimize left turns. This can be accomplished with both "circle" and "straight line" routing.

▸ **Use signs and decals to warn other drivers.** Decals stating, "This vehicle makes wide right turns" and "This vehicle makes frequent stops" have demonstrated success in reducing rear-end collisions and "squeeze" accidents.

▸ **Educate drivers to "have the radar up" as they get closer to their destination.** You'll want to reinforce right-hand turns vs. left-hand turns during road tests and ride evaluations.

Actual Course Image from ClearDrive™

Example of dangerous right turn

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Creating a Culture of Safety

Train Drivers Now, Save Money Later

The majority of parking lot collisions are 100% preventable, and that prevention starts with training. Here's what we recommend:

▶ Provide comprehensive defensive driving training like ClearDrive PRO-DEFENSE to all new hires before they're allowed to start deliveries.

▶ Offer ongoing training on common issues like distracted driving, injury prevention, and seasonal issues like winter hazards.

▶ Assign remedial training as soon as you know about a collision or near-miss. This helps drivers learn quickly from their mistakes and reduces liability for your company because you can prove you took action to address the problem.

Don't get caught up in thinking these incidents are minor. Dedicate the necessary resources to train your drivers properly, and you can save a lot of money, and reduce many injuries to your team.

Incentivizing Safety

Beyond formal training, there are other policies and practices that can have a positive impact on reducing backing accidents as well. As a manager, you can reinforce safety in a positive way, and enforce rules in a negative way.

▶ **Offer safety bonuses.** Many fleets have safety bonuses for going a certain period without an incident, or for completing all vehicle inspection reports on time. You can also add incentives for driving compliments (like those "how's my driving?" phone numbers).

▶ **Send regular safety messages.** As we mentioned at the beginning of this guide, regular reminders such as weekly emails, flyers or text messages can help reinforce safe driving habits.

▶ **Punish poor habits appropriately.** A single parking lot crash probably isn't cause for termination, but what about a second or third accident or failing to report a collision? The market for drivers might be tight, but the risks of keeping a training-resistant driver on the road aren't worth it.

The most effective way to build a culture of safety is to use both the carrot and the stick. Using both positive and negative reinforcement keeps drivers both accountable and encouraged.

UNINTENDED INCENTIVES

Make sure you don't unintentionally create a culture of silence with your incentives. No driver wants to be the person who kept the team from getting its bonus.

ClearDrive: Online Training for Commercial Fleets

Reach Everyone with Better Training

Great fleets look for proven ways to get better and work smarter. Safety and training are no different. Online training with ClearDrive is the best way to deliver better training to drivers for less time and money.

Why Leading Fleets Choose ITI

Leading fleets such as Frito-Lay, CVS Pharmacy and Shaw Flooring use ITI training.

Training is available to any computer, tablet or smartphone with an internet connection.

ClearDrive is available on the leading on-board devices.

- ▶ 70+ different lessons
- ▶ Mastery-based and "skip-proof"
- ▶ Fast: Lessons are divided into bite-sized 3-4 minute "chapters"
- ▶ Specialized topics like OSHA, workers' comp, and CSA

Safety Training Improves MPG

The many safety benefits of training are obvious —fewer crashes and lawsuits. However, there's also a correlation between safety and MPG. Behaviors like acceleration, fast braking and poor route planning can significantly add to a fleet's annual fuel costs.

Training your drivers to adopt safe driving habits can reduce annual fuel consumption by 5% to 30%, which will pay for the cost of training many times over.

GET STARTED WITH CLEARDRIVE

instructiontech.net/cleardrive

There's an old saying: The best time to plant a tree is 30 years ago. The second best time is today. The same notion applies to training. Plant the seed today by giving us a call at (360) 576-5976.