

TRUCK TALK

A Publication of
Continental Western Group®



MARCH 2011

Parking Lots

Driving into, out of, or through a parking lot can be a harrowing experience. We have all experienced it, all had our near-misses, and more than a few of us have either been hit in a parking lot, or hit someone else in a parking lot. So, what is it that makes a parking lot a hazardous place to be?

- Parking lots have lots of traffic and vehicles that are very close together. Generally speaking, parking lots are not made for trucks. Even truck stops present their own unique challenges. While truck stop entrances and exits are wider than other parking lots, the city streets you have to travel on to get to the truck stop are not designed for truck stop traffic. You still have to make that wide turn to get into the truck stop.
- Clear traffic patterns are not always visible and not always followed. Traffic laws govern and dictate the flow of traffic on public highways and byways. Parking lots are usually private property and as such traffic laws, in many states, do not apply to private property.
- Hazards can come at you from all sides of your vehicle and knowing what is in your blind spot is difficult.
- Once someone enters a parking lot, they are off the road and the distractions begin (except, of course, for you the professional driver). The cell phones come out, drivers are focused only on getting a parking spot as close to their store of choice as possible, the kids in the back start to get restless, and terms such as "Yield" and "Right of Way" are totally forgotten.
- Maintenance in some parking lots is just not very good. Potholes, faded paint lines, burned out lights, missing traffic signs, and, in season, snow piles that melt during the day and refreeze at night create hazards for all drivers.

What can be done to avoid parking lot accidents?

- **SLOW DOWN.** There is so much going on and so many distractions that you must keep 100% total control of your vehicle at all times. Your reaction time will be affected as well, so give yourself as much time as possible to avoid the other vehicle.
- Walk around your vehicle before getting in to see everything around you.
- Use your turn signals. Letting those around you know your intentions is more than common courtesy. If you are not sure what the other vehicle is going to do, stop and wait for them to decide.
- Use extra caution when entering and exiting a parking lot. You know how patient those 4-wheelers are. Also, those pedestrians seem to think they have the right of way...imagine that.
- Avoid parking in areas with no or too little lighting. Darkness is not your friend when parking.
- Try to always park in such a manner that you can pull out of the parking space rather than back out of it. This may not always be possible, but take advantage of the situation whenever you can.

If someone does happen to run into your vehicle in a parking lot, a) look for witnesses, b) call the police, c) call your insurance company, and d) fill out an accident information form and get the contact information from the other party. Do not just let them tell you their name and write down a phone number; this is the time to Trust but Verify. Make sure the other party is indeed who they say they are, as it is easy to give you a false name and make up a phone number.

Parking lots are a necessary evil when it comes to the transportation industry. You as a professional driver are expected to have control of your vehicle, be aware of your surroundings, and avoid the traps waiting for you in the parking lot.

lspain@cwains.com • jschenker@cwains.com • ckovachevich@cwains.com

Continental Western Group, LLC and affiliated companies assume no liability in connection with your use or non-use of the information provided in this document and do not guarantee that the information contained herein includes all possible risks or unusual circumstances that may occur in or to your business or that the advice or recommendations contained herein comply with all federal, state or local laws or regulations. Any advice or recommendations made in this document are intended to assist you in reducing risk of loss, thereby reducing the possibility that our companies will need to make a payment under an insurance policy. These recommendations are not intended to substitute for any obligation that you or anyone else may have to survey, repair, or modify any property, equipment or operations or to conduct safety programs. It is your legal responsibility to maintain safe premises, equipment and operations. This document provides general information only, is not legal advice, and is not a statement of contract. Any statement regarding insurance coverage made herein is subject to all provisions and exclusions of the entire insurance policy.

Copyright © 2011 Continental Western Group, LLC. All rights reserved.