

## DRIVING BUSINESS ~ Save the Fast Driving for the Movies and Stay Accident Free

In recent columns, we've explored information on the importance of maintenance to extend the life of the facilities and to reduce safety hazards. We've also provided information about the cost, design, and decision making factors concerning the construction of garages. Both of these articles suggest actions that have a common outcome –and that is about safety. Garages are constructed and maintained with safety in mind for vehicles, drivers, pedestrians, as well as for the employees who work there. PARK Roanoke takes safety seriously. This article is to hopefully inform anyone who parks in a surface lot or garage of some helpful safety tips that they may not otherwise have known.

Many people make the mistake of thinking that by parking in a lot or garage that an accident can't happen, after all, they are driving at lower speeds and no one is going to write them a ticket. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Actually, drivers are more focused on finding a parking space and least concentrated on their driving. Pedestrians are often distracted and more focused on quickly getting to their favorite restaurant than watching for other vehicles or looking for crosswalks. These factors combined may increase the likelihood of an accident or injury.

Consider this: When we each learned to drive, we were taught the basics of street and highway driving. How to drive or park in a garage or lot never came up or if taught, not likely remembered. For that sixteen year old, the most important thing was to obtain that driver's license and the freedom that came with it! The last thing on anyone's mind was thinking of how to navigate properly through a garage or parking lot. Perhaps entire generations have grown up without giving off-street parking safety a second thought. Therefore, it is important to view parking garages and lots as if they were streets and intersections with speed limits, signs, and traffic markings and patterns. Always remember rules of the road and defensive driving skills apply to off-street parking facilities as well.

Here are some general guidelines for safe parking:

### For Drivers:

- Obey the Speed Limits: PARK Roanoke garages have 5 MPH speed limit signs posted and they are there for a reason – high speed parking garages are best left for the movies. Do not race for an open parking space, there's plenty for everyone.
- Watch out for pedestrians. Whether there is a crosswalk or not, pedestrians always have the right of way. Pedestrians may be distracted by carrying packages, looking for keys or pushing a stroller. Stay alert and always yield to pedestrians. If you drive an electric vehicle, they may not hear you.
- If driving a large vehicle, van or truck, do not park near a turn or in a curve. Find another spot out of the way from the traffic aisle or close turns.
- Never stop behind parked vehicles while you are waiting for a space to open up, this blocks traffic for those who are trying to either enter or exit. If someone is pulling out from their spot or backing out, be courteous and stop for them, do not try and skirt around their vehicle.
- Obey the stop signs, yield signs, and directional arrows. Drive slowly around curves and on ramps and when navigating into the exit or entrance lanes.
- Park according to the size of your vehicle. When selecting a space to park, select one that "fits" the size of your vehicle. Never force your extra-large sedan or SUV into a space marked as "compact."
- Center your vehicle within the lines of the parking space. Be sure to park as straight as possible to prevent your vehicle from being an obstacle for others. By not crowding other parkers, this helps prevent door dings.
- Watch for drivers backing out of blind spots. When a smaller car is parked between a larger vehicle or SUV, they have no choice but to back blindly out of their space. So be alert and give them a break.
- Park as far forward as possible, either all the way into the space or to the wall. This prevents the parking area from becoming an obstacle course.
- Park only in designated areas. If you are parking for an hour or a day, do not park in reserved spaces or in spaces indicated for monthly parking or you may receive a parking violation ticket!
- Slow down in the rain. A parking lot filled with rain, snow or slush can splash over a passing pedestrian or even another driver impairing visibility.
- Don't pull too far forward if you drive a small vehicle (Mini Cooper, Honda Fit, Smart Car, etc). Someone might not see your car and think the space is 'open' and pull in a bit too quickly. Oops!



*The offices of PARK Roanoke are located at 117 Church Avenue, S. W., directly across the street from The Texas Tavern.*