

REFERENCE GUIDE

A Loss Control Service from Donegal Insurance Group



Reducing Backing Accidents

History

Each year, millions of miles are driven by commercial vehicles. Most of those miles arise from driving forward; however, a significant number of accidents occur while those same vehicles are backing up. Most backing accidents involve relatively minor property damage, but when vehicles back into pedestrians, serious injuries and fatalities have resulted.

Why do commercial vehicle backing accidents occur?

The leading cause of backing accidents is lack of visibility. Factors include:

- Blocked vision (signs, bushes)
- Poorly designed, positioned, and adjusted mirrors (mounting location, size, shape, line of sight)
- Pedestrians who are unaware of a backing vehicle
- Blind spots that cannot be corrected with mirrors
- Hard to see barriers behind the vehicle such as signs, posts, cargo in the vehicle and out
- Low visibility conditions (night time, weather, docks, garages)

Other contributing hazards that cause backing accidents include:

- Failing to continuously look behind
- "Assuming" the other driver will stop for you
- "Assuming" you have the right of way

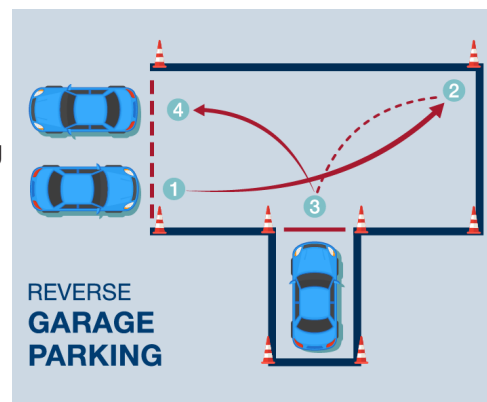
How can you avoid backing accidents?

The best advice and the message you should try to instill in your drivers regarding backing up is ... DON'T. Wherever possible, backing should be eliminated or minimized at each stop. This will require your driver to pre-plan the stop. Drivers should be trained to think about their arrival and departure zones by planning to park in such a way that avoids backing up. If needed, work with your customers to assist you in this safety goal. Your customers may be able to help redesign parking zones to facilitate no backing.

Technology can also make backing safer, especially for larger vehicles such as box trucks and vans. Rear-vision camera systems, additional front or back mirrors, and back-up alarms are options. The cost of such items is minimal when compared to the cost of an accident.

If backing is required, follow these general tips:

- Know your blind spots
- Think in advance - don't put yourself into unnecessary backing situations
- Check and adjust your mirrors - regularly
- Use a spotter if available
- Do a walk-around - know your clearances. Some employers require that cones be placed behind the vehicle after parking to ensure that this walk-around takes place.
- Remove distractions - no eating, turn down the radio, no talking on phone or other communication device



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- **GO SLOW!** If you hit something, you can stop quickly and minimize damage
- Avoid backing and turning
- When stopping or parking initially, attempt to stop/park in such a way that backing will **NOT** be required. It's preferable to back-into a parking spot or pull through a parking spot (where allowable) so you can drive out rather than back out.

Summary

Backing accidents don't have to happen. They can be avoided with sound driving practices and trained employees. Your Fleet Loss Control Program must have standards on backing so all drivers are clear on backing expectations. Review backing procedures regularly with all drivers. Investigate accidents thoroughly; discipline procedures must be enforced if your driver is found to have backed improperly or failed to follow written procedures. An excellent way to coach drivers on backing and other driving tasks is to have supervisors regularly ride with drivers.

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