

RoadWise attitude not just for the road: take it to the mall, too

Parking lots can be busy, confusing: a lesson in parking lot etiquette may help prevent a minor crash—or worse

You'd think you'd get a break once you get there.

Depending on where you live, you've negotiated wild animals (or neighbours), iced up roads, red light runners, tourists trying desperately to figure out where they'll end up if they take 42 South, and B-movie buffs who believe their vehicles will blow up if they travel below 100 km/h.

So, you manage to maneuver your way through all these obstacles with a combination of skill, cool-headed logic and paranoia and finally, your destination is in sight.

The shopping mall never looked so good. Now you can relax, let your guard down, unclench your teeth, and rub that knot in the back of your neck. You're not going to get mowed down in the parking lot.

You're safe—maybe.

Granted, the odds of being the unwilling participant in a serious accident in the parking lot are pretty



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slim. However, an MPI survey revealed some interesting factoids.

MPI survey

Between March and May of last year, we surveyed 984 claimants self reporting accidents across Manitoba. Of those surveyed, 218 claimants told us their accidents occurred in parking lots. From June to August, we surveyed another 984 people, and 177 of them said their accidents occurred in parking lots.

So, if we were to break the response of that small segment of claimants down into percentages, roughly 20 per cent of their accidents took place in parking lots. Just when you thought it was safe to go shopping.

Now, keep in mind, these are only the accidents that MPI hears about. I would hazard a guess that are many more bumps, scrapes and dents out there, but either the victim—lucky devil—doesn't notice it at the time, or both parties decide the damage is minor enough to handle privately, without a claim.

Parking lots, in theory, should be a no-brainer. You slow down, you circle the lanes in an orderly fashion until you find a spot, you signal and you pull in. And, you're just as careful when you exit.

That's in theory, of course.

You veterans of the parking lot wars know that reality is a different story. So, in the interest of making the unpleasant experience of shopping a bit brighter (remember, I'm a guy), let's go over some basic parking lot etiquette.

First and foremost, slowing right down is rather important. So what if it looks like it's clear sailing between

you and that parking spot ahead—you never know when someone is going to back out in front of you.

Parking lot etiquette

Which brings me to point number two. Reversing from a parking spot involves more than just backing up. It takes time. Check over your shoulder, check both ways and check often. This is a game of inches. Your rear view mirror is your new best friend. Use it.

This is a personal pet peeve of mine. How many times have you slammed on the brakes because someone reversed out of a parking spot in front of you and drove away, blissfully unaware that you were ever there?? I thought so.

Now, I must mention that your vigilance in parking lots should extend to other parking situations, too. Parkades, driveways, back lanes and front streets all have their share of parking demons just waiting for your

new paint job to arrive. Be careful.

Accidents in parking lots usually involve vehicle damage only. But I've seen some near misses, usually involving excessive speed or aggression, when things could have turned out much worse. Parking lots can be busy and confusing: pedestrians and other vehicles can pop out of nowhere, and the signage often leaves much to be desired.

There's a lot to keep track of, maybe more than you realize. Take a deep breath, don't rush, and stay defensive until you and your family are at the front door.

That's it for this week. Until next week, be **RoadWise**.

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