



# Did YOU know?

## Parking Lots

**Public parking lots offer numerous challenges for apparatus operators.**

Be prepared for tight corners, deadend areas, protective bollards, light posts, landscape rocks at the corners, choked fire lanes, and narrow aisles. The lots are designed to maximize the number of parking spaces for passenger vehicles and not for truck traffic. Stay out of parking lots if you can.

Vehicle traffic is variable in speed, unpredictable, and distracted. Expect patrons of shopping areas to be impatient. Expect them to act irrationally as they rush to get their errands done. Patrons stop paying attention to driving and look instead for their store and their parking spot. After shopping, people jump on their phones to text or talk about the marvelous purchases they just made or give an update to whoever is waiting for them at home. Expect distracted drivers.

Slow down and increase scanning for hazards. Watch for clues to what another vehicle is about to do—reverse lights, brake lights, body language, eye contact, or vehicle movements. Anticipate pedestrians crossing between parked vehicles. You have less space to work in and the only solution is to slow down.

Expect distracted pedestrians talking on their phones, reading texts, checking shopping lists, carrying packages, rushing to avoid the weather, or simply desperate for their morning coffee. Watch out for shopping carts that have gone rogue. Be vigilant for children who may be free-ranging while the adult loads the groceries in the car.

Plan ahead! Identify parking areas that offer easy ingress and egress for your apparatus. Anticipate the traffic patterns of the parking areas—time of day, day of the week, proximity of holidays. Try to plan your trips to avoid the busy times and minimize your exposure. Loading docks accept large vehicles frequently—could that be your best spot for your large vehicle?

Choose a parking spot where you won't get blocked in or require a 15-point turn to leave. If parking within regular vehicular parking spots angle the apparatus for your departure and ensure you don't leave opportunity for other vehicles to box you in. Drop traffic cones if you need a buffer space. Stay ready to respond.

It may be necessary to not park at all. Sometimes you may have to drop crew members off while the driver takes the unit around the block a few times or parks at a distance. If you have the option, keep a crew member with the driver as an aid. Utilize the talk-around channel to keep in touch and arrange a pick-up. The outside crew members are also in a good position to monitor the operations channels and maintain situational awareness.