

Liability

Grocery Store Parking Lot Safety

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Question

[Where can I find information related to parking lot safety, particularly with regard to employees collecting shopping carts?](#)

Response

You might be surprised to learn that local law enforcement may have jurisdiction in a parking lot. If the supermarket is having trouble enforcing the posted speed limits, use of crosswalks and other precautions, they may want to ask the local police to enforce the laws on the grounds. Officers can issue citations to help reinforce the posted pedestrian and vehicle markings. Appropriate signs and warnings, such as safe speed limits, warnings about the presence of speed bumps, or other obstructions should be posted.

Parking lot injury statistics are available in E&S Liability Report LB-92-60, *Pedestrian Safety in Parking Lots*.

Cart retrieval is a major factor in supermarket operations. Many stores have automated retrieval systems for shopping carts. The benefits of automated retrieval systems include improved safety for the operator, reduced material handling exposure, faster retrieval times and the need for fewer carts as a result. Employees retrieving carts should follow certain precautions. They should also be informed about how to safely perform the task. The training should include:

- How to avoid backing vehicles by looking for brake lights and listening for engine noise and other cues that a car is about to move.
- The situations that increase the chance of being hit by a car and how they can control those situations.
- How to make sure that they are able to be seen by drivers so that the likelihood of them backing up is reduced.
- The importance of wearing high-visibility apparel when performing cart return duty.

Parking Lot Design

The National Safety Council advises that the average safe speed for parking lot driving is between 5 and 10 miles per hour (mph). Anything faster could be fatal for a pedestrian in a collision. The parking lot should have well marked entrances and exits. Any place that may confuse drivers should have arrows or signs to guide them. Pavement markings, crosswalks, and stall markings should help drivers and pedestrians to remember to be safety-conscious.

Parking lot safety begins with parking lot design. The design is governed by local ordinance. The *Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities* is published by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). It is available for purchase from:

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<https://bookstore.transportation.org>. States address these specific locations in their state codes and statutes.

Pedestrian Safety Strategic Plan: Recommendations for Research and Product Development was published by the United States Department of Transportation (DOT), Federal Highway Administration in October 2010. The report recommended further research and better guidance in several key areas for pedestrian safety including the design of parking.

Many older pedestrians are particularly at risk from vehicles backing out of parking spaces and while crossing travel lanes within parking lots. The above-mentioned report indicates that traditionally, on-street and off-street parking facilities have rarely been designed and built to safely accommodate pedestrian travel to and from motor vehicles, and this has resulted in substantial numbers of pedestrian crashes in many areas. More information is available at: http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/pssp/.

See E&S Business Links Report BL-10-15 *Supermarkets*, for more information.

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