



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION REPORT

Issue 3 • 2016

Protective Insurance Company



SAFE PARKING & BACKING

Drivers experience congested roadways, massive highways and adverse driving conditions regularly, but most collisions do not occur under these conditions. Many collisions occur in an uncontrolled and potentially chaotic area: **parking lots**. Collisions in parking lots are usually minor and property damage is the most likely result. However, these minor collisions can add up to large costs because they can be more frequent, are often below insurance deductibles and can hurt relationships with customers. Informing your drivers of the following procedures can help reduce parking-related collisions.

When parking on narrow roadways or streets, pull out of the lane of traffic as far as you can, put on your four-way hazard flashers and fold your traffic-side mirrors in whenever possible to avoid having them struck. Unless you are stopped in a business or residential district during the period when vehicle lighted lamps are not required (see FMCSR Part 392.22), federal regulations state that if the vehicle is stopped for other than normal traffic stops, emergency triangles must be deployed within 10 minutes. It's also a best practice to use four-way hazard flashers from dusk to dawn, particularly in the winter months with reduced sunlight and adverse weather.

When you return to your vehicle, take a moment to **look around the vehicle** for obstacles and double check your plan for leaving the area. This step is very important in residential areas. Children and pets are common and you may not see a small child or animal with your mirrors. Children may also leave bikes or other objects around your vehicle. ➤➤

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“Many collisions occur in an uncontrolled and potentially chaotic area: **parking lots**.”



AVOIDING MAINTENANCE PIT INJURIES

Maintenance pits are necessary for servicing your vehicles; however, there are many dangers associated with them that could pose a severe threat to the safety of your employees. Understanding the laws and regulations of OSHA can protect your employees and prevent costly losses.

According to OSHA Standard 1910.21(a)(2), a “floor opening” is “an opening measuring 12 inches or more at its least dimension, in any floor, platform, pavement or yard through which persons may fall; such as a hatchway, stair or ladder opening, pit, or large manhole.” OSHA continues to state in Standard 1910.23(a)(5): “Every pit and trapdoor floor opening, infrequently used, shall be guarded by a floor opening cover of standard strength and construction. While the cover is not in place, the pit or trap opening shall be constantly attended by someone or shall be protected on all exposed sides by removable standard railings.”

An inquiry to an OSHA official resulted in a reference to a Federal Register published on May 2, 2003. This Federal Register specifically discusses the unique problem associated with the use of guardrails for perimeter protection that would otherwise interfere with normal work operations. It references

the fact that guardrails or similar fall protection devices may cause issues for employees when vehicles are moved over and/or away from the pit. The fact is also acknowledged that when a vehicle is parked over the pit, the primary hazard of falling to the surface below has been eliminated. Don't breathe a sigh of relief just yet. While there is an understanding of issues, it does not mean employee safety is not the top priority in this situation.

The General Duty Clause, Section 5(a)(1) states: “Each employer shall furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees.” In other words, the employer has the responsibility to take whatever measures necessary, and with all means possible, to protect the safety and health their employees. At no time should the “easy” route or the “least expensive” route be taken when it comes to ensuring the protection of human life.

A letter of interpretation posted by OSHA reads: “Employees engaged in maintenance work at bus and rail car inspection and repair pits when the bus or rail car covers the pit are not

“ **The employer has the responsibility to take whatever measures necessary, and with all means possible, to protect the safety and health of their employees.** ”

in violation of 29 CFR 1910.23(a)(5). When the pit or pits are not covered, employees walking at least 6 feet from the pit would not be in violation of 29 CFR 1910.23(a)(5), provided the following actions are implemented by the employer:

1. The employee's safety training program will instruct employees to maintain a 6 feet clear distance from the uncovered pits.
2. Highly visible contrasting lines will be installed 6 feet from the edge of pits.
3. Employer will install caution signs and ensure compliance by employees."

“One injury associated with falling into an open pit could more than eliminate any cost savings associated with them.”

So, are you in compliance if you train employees to maintain a clear distance of 6 feet from the pit, paint the floor 6 feet out from the edge with highly visible contrasting lines and install signage to warn employees of the pit? The answer is maybe. While the precautions mentioned above may be acceptable, it does not mean that is all that is required. The best practice for this type of situation is to ensure there is a standard railing surrounding the pits to ensure no one can fall to the bottom.

One injury associated with falling into an open pit could more than eliminate any cost savings associated with them. It can also prove life-altering to the employee who suffers injuries resulting from the fall. Following the regulations and guidelines set forth by OSHA can greatly diminish your risk of a workplace accident occurring.

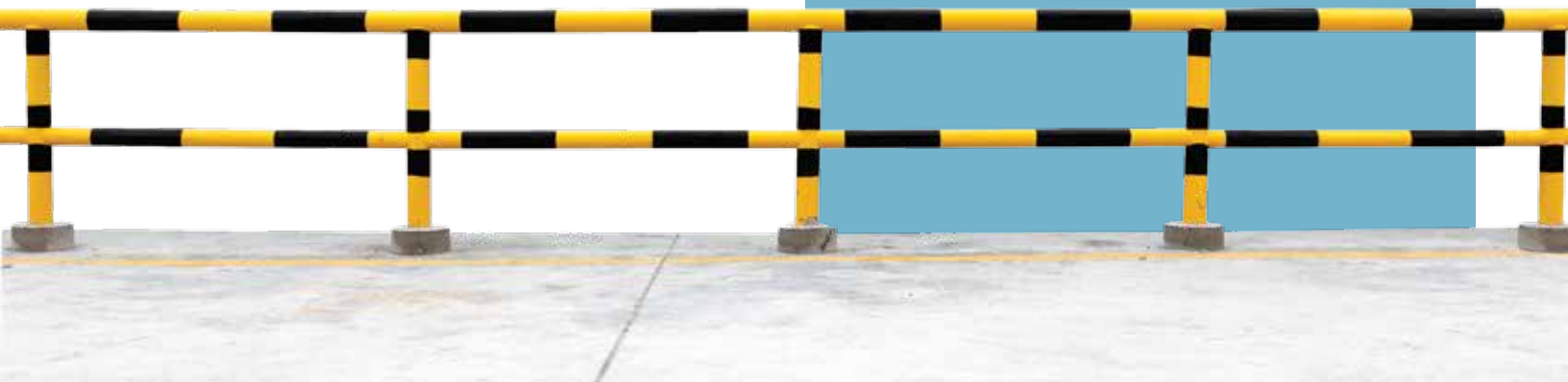
For more information, visit www.osha.gov. ■

Ask yourself the following questions:

**Is a standard railing a viable option?
If yes, install the railing.**

If no:

- Are employees trained and alerted to the presence of the pits? If so, is the training documented?
- Are employees trained to only be in the vicinity of a pit when a vehicle is over the pit and being serviced? If so, is the training documented?
- Is there adequate signage posted warning employees to the presence of the pit?
- Is the floor surrounding the pit painted in a contrasting color to warn employees they are in the vicinity of an open pit?
- When the pit is not in use, is there some barrier erected such as stanchions and chains so an employee cannot accidentally fall into the pit?
- Most importantly, have you taken every measure conceivably possible to protect employees from falling into an open pit?





SPOTLIGHT ON SAFETY RESOURCES

Protective's Loss Prevention & Safety Services Department prides itself on offering a wide variety of innovative programs and services to help customers reduce their risk exposure, successfully handle and analyze incidents, and proactively improve their fleet's safety.

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Safe Parking & Backing, Continued

➤➤ Before pulling back into traffic, check to make sure your mirrors are properly adjusted, activate your turn signal, check your mirrors, look over your shoulder for approaching traffic and carefully enter the lane of travel when clear. Be sure to also check your tail swing on the side of your vehicle closest to the curb by looking in the mirror on that side of the vehicle.

When parking in a lot, **scan the area** and look for where you are going to park and how you will need to exit the area. Notice the vehicle and pedestrian traffic flow and any fixed objects such as mailboxes, trash cans, light poles or signs where you intend to park. These objects may be hard to see with your mirrors and knowing they are there will help you avoid hitting them when you leave. Remember to look up to see low awnings and low hanging signs, which are commonly hit. This is especially important if you are parking along the building.

Backing can be **dangerous** and you should never back unless you have no other choice. Park your vehicle so that you can drive forward to leave whenever possible. If you are parking along a building, leave enough space between other vehicles or obstacles to allow you to pull forward. Avoid blocking traffic when doing this or you could create a dangerous condition for

your vehicle and passengers by encouraging motorists to drive around your vehicle.

If you are parking in marked spaces, it is best to find two spaces in a line so that you can pull through the first space and into the second. This will allow you to pull forward when you leave without ever having to back. The next best option is to back into a marked space because the space is a more controlled environment than the aisle and is safer to back into. You should start this process by rolling past the space to observe the area. If the space is clear, quickly honk your horn a few times to alert anyone that may be near the space and slowly back toward the driver's side. Check all of your mirrors and look over your shoulder to ensure that the space remains clear and you are not going to hit anything.

Always get out and look before and during your backing maneuver to verify there are no unknown hazards. If you are traveling to a new destination and you are unsure of where to park, try calling ahead and asking for specific instructions. This can help you avoid searching for parking in crowded lots and can help build good relationships with customers. Aerial views from the Internet can also help with advance planning, but remember, new obstacles may be present that are not shown online. ■