

In the Safe Zone: Parking Lot Safety

Parking lots are a special issue for many employers: they're a part of everyday work life, but because most employees don't do their work there, they're easy to overlook in terms of workplace safety. But they can—and do—pose a real hazard for employees, whether as drivers or pedestrians.

More often than not, simple changes to a parking lot's design and maintenance can help improve its overall safety. For example:

- ◆ *Traffic flow.* Is it clear which way cars should move within the parking lot? Are pedestrian walkways clearly marked? Creating a predictable flow of cars and people can help reduce parking lot accidents between cars, as well as those between cars and pedestrians.
- ◆ *Snow and ice removal.* Parking lots, by their nature, provide space, and storing snow typically poses no problem. Still, it's important to take a close look at where that snow is piled. Does it block the view of drivers or force pedestrians to walk in the road for an extended period? If so, re-examine where snow is piled. And don't forget to adequately sand or salt the parking lot and walkways on icy days to prevent sliding, slipping and falling.
- ◆ *Lighting.* Adequate lighting is a normal part of parking lot design, as is making sure the lights are on at appropriate times—taking into account the changes in sunset and daylight savings time. If your employees work different shifts, or if they can come in especially early or late, consider lighting the parking lot throughout the evening.
- ◆ *Landscaping.* Your parking lot may contain trees or shrubs that enhance the aesthetics of the area, but don't forget that their untended growth may affect the line of sight for drivers and pedestrians. You may also want to examine the lot's lighting as it relates to landscaping: does it create shadowed, secluded areas that may affect the perception of personal safety?
- ◆ *Preventing falls.* Getting to work from the parking lot is another area where lot design can make a big difference. Locating speed bumps away from pedestrian traffic and ensuring tire stops are well marked and maintained can go a long way toward preventing trips and falls. Pay attention to—and quickly repair—any hazards such as broken pavement or gratings to maintain a safer walking environment for pedestrians.

Accompanying blurb:

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