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Dangerous Conditions: Managing Vehicle Hazards in Public Parking Lots

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Vehicle traffic hazards in public parking lots can arise from a variety of conditions that increase the potential for collisions involving vehicles, pedestrians, and fixed objects. Parking areas for public services often experience high vehicle turnover and increased pedestrian congestion that increase the potential for accidents to occur. A continuous improvement approach to parking lot safety management not only protects employees and members of the public but also helps organizations fulfill their duty of care, reduce liability exposure, and promotes a safer environment for all facility users.

Common vehicle traffic hazards in public parking lots include blind intersections, limited maneuvering space, obstructed sightlines, excessive vehicle speeds, and poorly defined traffic patterns. These conditions can reduce driver awareness and reaction time, increasing the likelihood of accidents and injuries. To mitigate these risks, entities should implement a combination of engineering, administrative, and maintenance controls.

The foundation of an effective parking lot safety program begins with proper facility design and traffic engineering. Parking lots should be designed to promote safe and predictable vehicle movement while minimizing conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians. One-way traffic patterns should be utilized where feasible to reduce congestion and confusion. Clearly marked entrances and exits help drivers navigate parking areas safely, while designated travel lanes improve traffic flow. The design should also seek to separate pedestrian pathways from vehicle circulation routes whenever possible. By reducing the number of interaction points between pedestrians and vehicles, entities can significantly decrease the likelihood of serious incidents.

Traffic circulation should be clearly defined with well-marked directional lanes, designated pedestrian crosswalks, and clearly identified entry and exit points. Traffic control signage should be installed and maintained to provide drivers with clear guidance regarding speed limits, right-of-way requirements, and parking restrictions.

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Vehicle speed is another critical factor in parking lot safety. Excessive speed contributes to both the frequency and severity of collisions. Entities should establish and enforce low-speed limits throughout parking facilities. Physical traffic-calming measures such as speed bumps, speed tables, raised crosswalks, and lane narrowing can be highly effective in encouraging drivers to reduce their speed. Pavement markings and strategically placed signage should reinforce speed expectations and alert drivers to areas where pedestrians may be present.

Adequate visibility and lighting are critical to preventing vehicle-related incidents in parking facilities. Parking lots should be designed to minimize blind corners and maintain clear sightlines at intersections, drive aisles, entrances, and exits. Landscaping, signage, and other potential obstructions should be routinely inspected and maintained to preserve visibility, while convex mirrors or similar devices may be used where sight restrictions cannot be eliminated. Lighting should provide sufficient illumination throughout parking areas, walkways, and pedestrian crossings, with regular inspections and prompt repairs of damaged or malfunctioning fixtures.



Clear and consistent signage is another important component of parking lot safety management. Drivers and pedestrians rely on signs and pavement markings to understand traffic patterns, parking restrictions, speed limits, and pedestrian crossings. Ensure all signs are properly installed, maintained, and visible. Pavement markings such as directional arrows, stop bars, parking stall lines, accessible parking symbols, and crosswalks should be inspected regularly and refreshed when they become faded or difficult to see.

By incorporating thoughtful parking lot design, proactive maintenance activities, and regular traffic flow assessments, public entities can identify and address congestion areas, recurring interactions between vehicles and pedestrians, and locations where visibility may be restricted. Findings from these evaluations should be used to implement corrective actions, improve traffic circulation, and enhance overall parking lot safety. Through ongoing monitoring, maintenance, and continuous improvement efforts, public entities can effectively reduce vehicle-related hazards and provide a safer and more efficient environment for employees, visitors, and the public.

If you have any questions about mitigating vehicle hazards in parking lots, contact [PRISM Risk Control](#).