

Parking Lot Safety

By Cari Gray, CSP, BWC Safety Consultant

Before you begin

Look for an instance of employees or customers falling or having near misses in parking lots. You may want to check your organization's Occupational Safety and Health Administration 300 logs, BWC claims history and accident reports, and contact your liability insurance carrier. Also, consider asking employees if they have ever had an incident or near miss in a parking lot to obtain good examples for training.

You will learn

- How to identify the main safety concerns in parking lots
- How companies and employees can reduce injuries in parking lots
- How to increase awareness for issues in parking lots

Introduction

A significant number of injuries occur among employees, customers and visitors in parking lots and other exterior areas of facility. It seems that every business has at least one serious injury or workers' compensation claim a year related to falls in parking lots or on other exterior grounds. Taking actions to identify hazards and make corrections can prevent these types of injuries, and reduce the pain, suffering and financial burdens that injuries can cause.

Discussion

This training will focus on three main concerns related to parking lot safety: personal security, slip and fall injuries and vehicle accidents.

Personal security

Always emphasize and practice personal security in parking areas. It is important to scan the parking lot for threats while leaving or arriving at your vehicle. Whenever possible, travel with someone if you are going to an unfamiliar or unsafe place. Arrange for someone to escort you if you have concerns. Try to park in well-lit spaces and avoid secluded or obstructed areas. Be prepared to enter and exit your vehicle quickly by having your keys ready. Hide and secure valuables. Above all – stay alert and aware of your surroundings at all times.

Slip, trip and fall hazards

Mitigate slip and fall exposures in parking lots by focusing on a few key items. Make sure you keep all parking lots and sidewalks in good condition. If speed bumps are necessary, clearly identify them so they do not become tripping hazards. Mark routes separately for traffic and pedestrians. Make certain illumination is adequate and replace burned out lamps promptly.

There are also items that you should focus on during inclement weather such as rain and snow in relation to slip and fall injuries. Be sure to maintain parking lots for water drainage and snow removal. Snow removal responsibilities need clearly defined whether done internally or externally. If snow removal is an inside job, be sure the proper equipment, including snow removal vehicles, salt (or ice melting chemical), snow blowers and shovels are available. If you contract with an outside company for snow removal, make sure your expectations regarding the timing and frequency of removal are clearly defined. Remind employees frequently to slow down and focus on walking when there is snow and ice. Wear proper shoes while going in and out of a building. Walk with your feet turned outward and in small shuffling steps when possible. At this point, the instructor should demonstrate how to walk (aka like a duck).

Vehicle Accidents

Many motor vehicle accidents happen in parking lots. There are a variety of things that a company can do to reduce the likelihood of having a vehicle accident in a parking lot. Maintain speed limit signs and enforce a safe speed in all parking lots and access roads. Ensure the traffic pattern and parking spaces are obvious and marked. Parking spaces need to be large enough. Maintain good illumination and visibility in all areas of the parking lot. Finally, train all employees on parking lot safety to increase awareness.

Employees and customers can prevent accidents by following a few suggestions. Be aware and look in all directions as you travel. Watch for cars that might be cutting diagonally across the lot, and drive slowly. Employees who have to work in parking lots as attendants, escorts, security or cart collectors should wear reflective vests.

Always drive slowly, use turn signals and yield the right of way to cars travelling along aisles. Try to align your vehicle in the center of a parking space. If you park over the line, diagonal or not into a space far enough, you may not give other drivers the appropriate room to park their vehicle without harming yours. Also, look for spots where you can pull through and face out to prevent the need for backing when you leave. Avoid parking between large vehicles whenever possible. Spending a little extra time to park your vehicle will improve your chances of avoiding an accident.

Group activities

There are many things to do to get trainees involved in parking lot safety. Have the group take a tour of your parking areas to identify hazards. Get a small group involved in evaluating the flow of a parking lot or sidewalk traffic. Finally, ensure all employees have a way to report concerns about safety including those in the parking lots.

Conclusion

Safety does not stop when you leave the building. Parking lot safety needs emphasized and followed to prevent harm to customers and employees. Focusing on personal security, slip and fall injuries and vehicle accidents can go a long way in reducing injuries and positively affecting the bottom line at your company.

References

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Author

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