

Vehicle backing safety

According to the National Highway Safety and Transportation Administration, backing accidents cause 500 deaths and 15,000 injuries per year. The use of good backing techniques, continued vehicle backing education and practice in a secure site can help prevent these types of accidents. Here are a few pointers to share with your drivers:

- Vans and buses used to transport congregants do not have the same visibility as passenger vehicles.
- Blind spots can extend up to 16 feet in front and 160 feet behind a vehicle.
- Drivers should never depend upon mirrors exclusively while backing.
- Turn your head to both sides to observe blind spots that cannot be seen from your mirrors.
- If necessary, use a responsible adult to help act as a spotter to assist and communicate with the driver and to warn pedestrians to stay clear.

Avoid backing vehicles

- **Plan ahead**
Whenever possible, drivers should **avoid backing vehicles**. Drivers should let passengers off at the front of the church and then drive to a remoter area of the parking lot. The driver should pull the vehicle through parking space and position it to eliminate the need to back up.

When backing is unavoidable

- **Back into parking spaces**
When arriving at a destination, rather than pulling into a parking space, vehicle drivers are encouraged to back into the space. Backing into parking spaces is an industry-recognized best practice, which is used to help avoid collisions while backing. This may seem counter intuitive, but the driver is likely to be more aware of his or her surroundings

and have greater visibility when backing into a parking space. When approaching a parking space, observe the area before attempting to back in. Vehicles that are left unattended should be re-inspected by the driver prior to pulling out of a parking space to avoid collision. Keep in mind that the area surrounding a parked vehicle can change dramatically when the driver is away.

- **Look around the vehicle before backing**
Walk around your vehicle looking for pedestrians and obstacles.
- **Don't assume or anticipate**
Drivers arriving and departing from the same location multiple times per day can be lulled into a false sense of confidence. Drivers must always be alert and prepared to avoid hazards that arise.
- **When the view is obstructed**
Use a spotter when possible. If not, slowly back-up the vehicle a couple of feet and then stop. Before proceeding, check behind the vehicle. Keep doing this until you have finished maneuvering the vehicle.



Maintain a perimeter of safety around your vehicle

The concept is fairly simple in that you should attempt to maintain a safe distance surrounding your vehicle while in traffic to allow yourself adequate time to stop the vehicle or safely maneuver around a hazard.

Following distances - count the seconds

The first step of maintaining a safe following distance from the vehicle in front is to understand what a safe distance should be. Nationally, driver education programs have defined a safe following distance as being between two to four seconds from the vehicle ahead of you. This is largely dependant on the conditions of the road and speed of the vehicle. While opinions vary as to the number of seconds, they all agree upon the concept of a safe distance. To determine how maintain a safe distance use the following tips:

- Drivers should never talk on cell phone while driving as this distraction can delay reaction time to brake the vehicle.
- Gauge your distance from the vehicle ahead of you by counting the number of seconds it takes you to pass a fixed point the lead vehicle just passed. Count to yourself "one-one-thousand, two-one-thousand" ...If you reach the same point before you have finished counting at least to "two-one-thousand" you should increase the distance between the vehicle ahead of you by gradually slowing down.
- As a rule, a two-second following distance is the minimum distance a car should maintain when following another car when road and environmental conditions are good. You should add one more second for each of the following: if you are driving a large occupancy van or bus, for inclement weather conditions, if you are following a motorcycle, if the vehicle behind you is tailgating your vehicle.

Don't drive next to another vehicle

Many drivers are unaware they may be riding in another driver's blind spot and, as a result, don't leave themselves an escape route to avoid collision.

- Do not drive inside of someone's blind spot. If you cannot see the eyes of the other driver, chances are they cannot see you.
- Try to leave an "out" on either side of your vehicle. This includes driving lanes or road shoulders on either side.

Tailgating drivers

Tailgating is an aggressive and dangerous behavior. Drivers who encounter tailgaters should simply signal, change lanes and let the driver pass through without confrontation. If you are on a two-lane road or otherwise are unable to move over to the right safely, slow down slightly below the normal flow of traffic speed and increase your own following distance to the vehicle ahead. Slowing down will make it easier for your tailgater to pass you when it is possible to do so. Increasing your own following distance takes into consideration the reduced reaction and braking time of your tailgater. Your increased cushion will allow you to brake more gently and reduce the chance of the tailgater rear-ending your vehicle.

Do not tap or slam on your brakes. Both actions will only worsen your situation. Ignore honking and rude gestures. Don't respond or make eye contact. If you can do so safely, contact police with the vehicle description, license number, location and direction of travel.

Current stopping distance requirements for medium and heavy-duty vehicles (NHTSA)

Vehicle type	Stopping distance from 60 mph, empty	Stopping distance from 60 mph, loaded
Buses (including school buses)	280 ft	280 ft
Single unit trucks (except buses)		
• Weight > 10,000 lbs	335 ft	310 ft
• 8,000 - 9,999 lbs	242 ft	216 ft
• 7716 lbs - 7,999 lbs	216 ft	216 ft
Truck-tractors	335 ft	n/a
Truck-tractors with unbraked control trailer	n/a	355 ft
Semi-trailers, trailers, and converter dollies	Dynamometer requirement	Dynamometer requirement

