

Safe Vehicle Backing

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Backing The Safe Way...

The National Safety Council has estimated that only 2% of the average driver's experience is acquired from vehicle backing, which indicates a likely contributing factor related to the high number of backing accidents in this country annually. Reducing vehicle backing accidents is possible, when applying some basic concepts, as follows:

Avoid backing whenever possible

More often than you'd think, you can effectively plan your travels, enabling you to avoid unnecessary backing of your vehicle. Place your vehicle in a position that allows you to pull forward into traffic, avoiding a backing maneuver. Place your vehicle so that you minimize your backing distance. When you must back, remember these simple and effective defensive driving rules:

More on reverse

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1. Get out and “get the picture”

Obviously backing a car is much easier than backing a large commercial vehicle. The larger your vehicle is and /or the poorer vision to the rear, the more important it is for you to get out and walk around your vehicle.

“Looks are for free”

Look around, up and down. The safe driver uses skills and observation while checking out the area where the vehicle will be backed.

Check:

- The surface you will be backing over. Are there any unusual depressions, holes, buildups or debris?
- Is there an exposure to pedestrian traffic?
- Are there fixed objects that present a problem?
- How about clearances? How wide is the area where you are backing?
- Don't forget to check overhead for wires and overhanging structures.

Use help when available

If at all possible, get someone to help you back. Remember to keep that person in view in your mirror and in a safe position. Watch their signals carefully, but backing safely is still your responsibility. Work out hand signals in advance, if necessary.

2. Back from the driver's side

The less distance you have to back and the more you can see while backing, the better. Once you have checked around your vehicle, begin backing as soon as possible. This is important so the situation around you doesn't change.

Typically, backing from the driver's side gives you better control and the best visibility while conducting your backing maneuver.



While backing during your daily drive may sometimes be necessary, you can



make sure it's done safely by using common sense defensive driving knowledge and skill.

3. Back slowly

While you don't want conditions to change behind you, and you want to begin backing as soon as possible, back slowly! Backing a vehicle is awkward compared to the typical forward driving conditions. The faster you back, the harder it is to keep control of your vehicle and judge distance. If you do strike an object while backing rapidly, you are likely to do more damage as well.

4. Check both sides of your vehicle as you back

Properly judging your clearances during your “pre-backing” walk around, should allow you to back from the driver's side fairly easily. That is no excuse however for not checking your mirrors as you back. It is wise to stop 3/4 of the way back, set your brake, place your vehicle in park, and get out of your vehicle to check the remaining distance for unobstructed backing space. Relying solely upon your mirrors, especially in unfamiliar situations can be very foolish and potentially a costly mistake.