

How to Minimize Risk in Parking Lots and Garages

Most churches have parking lots and perhaps also parking garages to maintain. These suggestions from Steve Follos, Vice President and Manager of Church Insurance Agency Corporation (CIAC), will help make your parking areas safer places for your parishioners and employees.

Physical care

- *Lighting:* Make sure your entire parking lot is well-lit. Proper lighting can both reduce accidents and deter criminal activity.
- *Pavement:* If you have a pothole, placing an orange safety cone near or inside it is a good temporary solution, but potholes and pavement cracks should be repaired in a timely manner.

Driver safety

- *Take it slow:* Use common sense and go slowly. Look out for pedestrians and other vehicles.
- *Avoid backing out of spots:* If possible, park in such a way that you don't need to pull out in reverse; this cuts down opportunities for an accident to occur.

Pedestrian safety

- *Be aware of vehicles:* Don't move quickly in unexpected ways. Treat walking through a parking lot or garage as if you were crossing a street.
- *Watch children:* Keep children nearby and hold their hand if necessary. Help them to walk slowly and carefully in areas where a car is likely to suddenly appear.

Criminal activity

The **Bureau of Justice Statistics** <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=44> found that “more than 1 in 10 property crimes occurred in parking lots or garages.” Protect yourself and your property by:

- Locking your vehicle doors
- Stowing valuables in your vehicle out of sight
- Avoiding parking next to large vehicles that might obstruct others from being able to see your vehicle
- Being aware of surroundings
- Avoiding using cell phones, particularly in parking garages at night
- Parking near good lighting and the entrance of the garage at night
- Considering carrying pepper spray
- Keeping your finger on your car alarm button
- Taking your keys out before you walk into a dark lot or garage

Following these safety guidelines for parking lots and garages will help you to minimize the chance of injury, accidents, or being the victim of a crime.