



News Release

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BLACK FRIDAY MADNESS FOR MOTORISTS LEADS TO INCREASED CALLS FOR LOCK-OUT SERVICE TO AND FENDER BENDERS, ACCORDING TO AAA

Auto Club Offers Tips to Avoid Common Holiday Parking Lot Pitfalls

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA (Wednesday, November 21, 2012) – As the National Retail Federation predicts that up to 147 million shoppers will take advantage of “*Black Friday*” deals this Friday and throughout the weekend. Parking lots will be overflowing with often over-excited holiday shoppers. AAA Tidewater Virginia cautions bargain hunters to avoid common parking lot pitfalls and to keep their wits about them at all times. “Overly zealous shoppers can forget even the most basic things when rushing to get the best deals or make it before power hour type deals expire, often locking their keys in their cars or hitting another vehicle when zipping in and out of parking spaces,” said Georjeane Blumling, Vice President of Public Relations for AAA Tidewater Virginia.

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 20 percent of all vehicle collisions that result in damage claims occur in parking lots. Don’t let trivial parking lot wars dim your holiday glow, warns AAA Tidewater Virginia. Avoid petty confrontations that can result in additional holiday expenses, including fender-benders, personal injuries and a general Grinch-like attitude.

“Unfortunately, tempers can run high and patience short as drivers circle parking lots in search of that coveted parking space,” added Blumling. “Otherwise rational-thinking people can transform into someone completely different when the search for convenient parking and bargains begin.”

Because Black Friday kicks off the busiest of shopping seasons, AAA Tidewater Virginia offers the following advice for navigating parking lots and protecting vehicles and pedestrians as they seek those special gifts and door busters:

Head for the side door and play the outfield. Many shoppers want to park near their favorite stores or near the mall entrance. Most malls have secondary entrances on the sides and those entrances usually have less traffic and additional convenient spaces. Also, outlying areas normally have more open spaces, lighter traffic and a lower risk of collision. Plus, it doesn’t hurt to walk off the holiday treats.

See and be seen. Use your headlights when scouring parking garages for spaces, even in the daytime. The light will let other cars see you coming around turns and can make fitting into that tight parking space a little easier. Research shows that keeping vehicle headlights on reduces crash risks, even during daylight hours.

Beware of tall vehicles. Avoid parking between a pair of tall SUVs or minivans where it might be hard for you to back out of the space. If you can’t see well enough to back out safely, get help from one of your passengers.

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Look out for little ones. It can be difficult to see small children in busy parking lots. Be aware of your surroundings and look for children, who may make quick and unpredictable movements. When walking to and from stores, hold the hands of your children to keep them safe from traffic.

Stay on track and alert. Pedestrians should use walkways and crosswalks, if available. If walking in the traffic lanes is unavoidable, be alert for subtle cues – including exhaust or reverse lights – that signal a vehicle is about to pull out.

Make sure you have your keys before locking the car door. Every year on the weekend after Thanksgiving, AAA technicians are very useful to members who are stranded because they are locked out of their cars.

Thieves like to window shop. Place all shopping bags and valuables in the trunk, including the GPS and its mount, so they won't be visible to would-be thieves. Remove any evidence, such as GPS suction cup marks from the vehicle's windshield. It takes a thief just seconds to smash a window and steal your shopping loot.

Stay on guard in parking lots. Choose a well-lighted area to park at night. When returning to your vehicle, have keys ready in hand and check the car's interior before entering, using a keychain flashlight or even an I-Phone APP.

Slow down, buckle up. Even a low-speed collision can result in injuries. Make sure that everyone is strapped in a seat belt or child safety seat while the vehicle is in motion, even if it is just a short trip to another part of the parking lot.

Wait until Cyber Monday. Many retailers will have special online promotions on Cyber Monday.

As part of North America's largest motoring and leisure travel organization, AAA Tidewater Virginia provides its more than 325,000 members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive-related services. Since its founding AAA Tidewater Virginia has been a leader and advocate for the safety and security of all travelers. For more information, visit AAA.com and follow us on Twitter at [Twitter.com/AAATWnews](https://twitter.com/AAATWnews).

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