Headline: Busy shopping centers up parking risks

Deckhead: Holiday season should keep motorists on extra alert

The day following Thanksgiving – better known as Black Friday – kicks off the holiday-shop­ping season. It’s a time when millions of shoppers, eager to find deals, wait in line or camp outside a store to get first crack at discounted merchandise.

Shoppers should anticipate busier roads and parking lots, and plenty of pedestrians. AAA recommends drivers take precautions and exhibit patience and courtesy by safely sharing parking lots.

Attention to safety keeps others from harm’s way and avoids putting a damp­er on the holiday season. Few things ruin a moment worse than a car acci­dent. The sound is debilitating and the outcome could be costly. Safety always should be a priority.

AAA offers these tips on how to approach shopping-center parking during the holiday season:

***Drive slowly inside parking lots and garages –*** Scoring that great deal isn’t worth the risks of speeding to find a space.

***Stay off your mobile device and always watch for pedestrians and other vehicles –*** Remember, they might not be paying attention to their sur­roundings.

***Back out slowly from your space, especially if you’re near large vehicles –*** Pause once you can see beyond the vehicles parked next to you. This allows passing drivers to see your car.

***Back into your parking space* –** This allows you to pull out of the spot with better visibility.

***Learn to play the outfield –*** Outlying areas have more spaces, lighter traffic and less risk of collision. Parking a greater distance from the store should lessen the risk of collision, and you’ll likely deal with less pressure from impa­tient shoppers who are searching to find the “perfect” spot.

***See and be seen –*** Use your head­lights when searching for a spot, even during the daytime. The light will let other cars see you approaching around turns and can make fitting into a tight spot easier.

***Don’t trap yourself –*** Avoid parking between a pair of tall SUVs or minivans, where it might be difficult to back out of the space. Seek help from a passenger if you can’t see well enough to exit the spot safely.

***Keep an eye out for pedestrians and small children –*** Kids can be difficult to see in busy parking lots and often make quick, unpredictable movements. Hold their hands when walking to and from the car to keep them safe from traffic.

***Always wear your seatbelt –*** Injuries can occur, even at slow speeds. Make sure all passengers are buckled up while the car is moving.

Shop ’til you drop but pay attention to your driving. Don’t put a damper on the jolliest time of the year.

Cutline: **SHOP CLASS –** Drivers and pedestrians should be on alert for vehicles, shoppers and buggies when visiting shopping centers during the holiday season. Image: Africa Studios. Adobe Stock.

Pull text

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