

Reversing safely

QFleet driver safety fact sheet

The majority of drivers spend a very small amount of their driving time in reverse gear, but the vehicle damage which occurs while reversing is one of the largest contributors to motor vehicle insurance claims in terms of both the frequency of collisions and the total cost of the repairs.

The damage usually results from the insured vehicle being reversed into an object, a building or another vehicle. In the very worst cases a child or other pedestrian could be the victim.

Reversing and the law

A driver who does not reverse a vehicle safely is breaking the law:

**Transport Operations
(Road Use Management
— Road Rules)
Regulation 2009 Part 18
Miscellaneous road rules**

296 Driving a vehicle in reverse

(1) The driver of a vehicle must not reverse the vehicle unless the driver can do so safely. Maximum penalty—20 penalty units.

(2) The driver of a vehicle must not reverse the vehicle further than is reasonable in the circumstances. Maximum penalty—20 penalty units.

Employers also have obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*. If drivers are regularly having collisions while reversing a work vehicle there is a requirement for a risk assessment to be carried out to identify the measures needed to minimise the risk.

Reversing collisions

Many of the collisions are contributed to by poor reversing visibility and by the driver's failure to compensate. The majority of reversing collisions occur at low speed and would be preventable if drivers took some very simple safety precautions and modified their driving behavior.

Considerations

Some of the issues to consider when assessing the risks associated with reversing include:

- Can the need to reverse be avoided?
- Is there enough space to reverse safely?
- Is there a need to highlight objects or hazards with high visibility paint or other coatings to make them more visible?
- Is the size of the vehicle contributing to the risk?
- Would a smaller vehicle reduce the risk?
- Is it safer to reverse into a parking space so that the vehicle can drive out forwards?
- Is there a need to separate pedestrians from reversing vehicles?
- Does the vehicle have restricted rear vision?
- Would a vehicle with a better Reversing Visibility Index reduce the risk?
- Is a guide needed to assist the driver with reverse parking?
- Is there a requirement for training, instruction and supervision?
- Is there a requirement for in-vehicle parking aids such as reverse parking sensors or reversing cameras?

Tips for safer reversing

The following tips may be useful to reduce the risk associated with reversing vehicles:

- Is it safe and necessary to reverse?
- Ensure that the vehicle's rear vision mirrors are clean and properly adjusted to maximise rear vision.
- Consider fitting blind spot mirrors or "fish eye" mirrors to increase rear and side vision.
- Avoid reversing over a long distance. It may be safer and easier to turn around or drive around the block.
- Visually check for obstacles on approach to a reverse parking area.
- Always aim to enter and leave any road in a forward direction.
- Never reverse from a minor road onto a major road.
- If reversing across an obscured footpath or other area where there may be pedestrians, use the vehicle's horn to warn them.
- Give way to pedestrians if entering a roadway from a driveway.
- Reverse slowly, use the mirrors and check both sides. Look back and continue to look back whilst moving in reverse.
- If it's difficult to look back while reversing, the seatbelt may be removed. Seatbelts are not required to be worn when reversing.
- Reversing vehicles have no right of way. If a vehicle approaches from behind, remain stationary and GIVE WAY until it passes.
- If there is uncertainty that the way is clear because of blind spots, someone may be able to guide the driver. Otherwise the driver should get out and check for obstacles
- Don't be too proud or shy to ask someone to guide while reversing. It's less embarrassing to use a guide than to crash a vehicle.
- Walk around the vehicle and check for hazards before reversing from a parking area with restricted rear vision.
- Get into the habit of reverse parking where vision is obscured. Reversing into a parking spot will allow the vehicle to drive out with better vision.
- If driving an unfamiliar vehicle, practice reversing to become aware of the vehicles rear visibility, turning circle and potential blind spots.
- Select smaller vehicles for the best fit and easier parking in cramped parking conditions.
- Select vehicles which have a high Reversing Visibility Index rating.

The Reversing Visibility Index

Some Australian motoring organisations have tested the visibility to the rear of many popular new vehicles and have published the results in a [Reversing Visibility Index](#). It measures how well a driver can see out of the back of a car. A rating system has been devised to allow comparisons to be made between vehicles. This system takes into account both the visible area and visible distance across the rear of the vehicle. Results are rated on a scale of 0 - 5, with a rating of five indicating the best rearward vision.

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