

Safe Truck Parking: Your Holiday Preparation and Survival Guide

Last year, more than 100 million people hit the nation's highways between Dec. 23 and Jan. 2, according to the [American Automobile Association \(AAA\)](#). Experts predict that this year's holiday traffic patterns will be just as active.

But for professional truck drivers, crowded roads aren't the only holiday hazard they will see while driving. Truck stops and other CMV-designated parking areas will be extra crowded during the holiday season and drivers must plan ahead.

Right now, a lack of available truck parking nationwide ranks as the No. 1 industry concern among truckers, according to the [American Transportation Research Institute's annual survey](#). And with the holidays bringing more truck traffic due to increased package deliveries and returns, it could be harder than ever to find a safe place to park.

These five tips can help you survive the holiday season, find safe parking, and protect you, your vehicle and your cargo.

1. Plan Ahead

"Good dispatch at the beginning of the day will save you time throughout the entire day," says Chuck Pagesy, director of safety at Penske. Look at your route at the start of the day and identify safe parking areas close to your destination. Start your route early if possible — truck stops can reach capacity as early as 7 p.m. Consider reserving a parking spot in advance. Also, consider speaking with a more experienced driver that may know the area better than you do. They will be able to help guide you in parking selection.

2. Watch Your Hours of Service (HOS)

If you wait until the last minute to find parking, you could run out of driving hours. Keep an eye on your HOS throughout the day to reduce the risk of a potential HOS violation.



3. Choose Wisely

Always park in well-lit areas. If possible, choose a spot you can pull in and out of easily without needing to back up. Avoid areas where other trucks are parked at odd angles or over the painted lines. Try not to park at the end of a row, where collisions are more likely to happen.

4. Know Where NOT to Park

Do not park on the shoulder of the highway or on offramps and onramps.

5. Lock it Up

Lock all doors and hide valuables such as wallets and smartphones. Close all windows. Consider using window shades. Make sure your cargo is secure. Dash cams may also help deter thieves.

Bonus Tip:

If you have a breakdown or need to pull over to the side of the road for any reason this holiday season, remember to wear a high-visibility safety vest. Always know the location of your roadside emergency kit and how to use it. This will increase the chances you'll be seen by oncoming drivers.