LiveWell @work with Iowa Methodist Occupational Medicine

How Complacency Killed the Cat (and My Bumper)

A few weeks ago, I went on-site to visit a client location and was a bit surprised when I arrived. Every vehicle in the parking lot was backed into its stall. Personal vehicles, company vehicles, without exception. A bit bewildered, I found a space and promptly drove in frontward, suddenly quite conscious of my decision and confronted with a newfound curiosity about the reasons behind this parking phenomenon.

Coincidentally, a few weeks before this client visit, I was leaving my office for an appointment in my usual rush. I hopped into my Prius, dropped it into reverse, and with warning beeps beeping and rearview camera fully functioning, proceeded to promptly slam directly into a car passing behind me through the lot. Needless to say, I had a very different conscious thought at that moment. How could I have been so careless?!

It's easy to see that backing into a parking space is safer. But without thinking about it, even though every car at my client's location was parked backward, I continued to operate my vehicle with a complacent attitude – I drove right into my spot frontward, probably because I'd parked and un-parked my car thousands of times without incident. Even my recent accident didn't break my complacency. But it should only take once, as all my colleagues in safety tell me. After that, it's usually too late.

Encourage your employees to try something as simple as backing into their parking spaces to encourage awareness and safety in your parking lots. Subscribe to one of many national safe driving philosophies that offer training courses and support materials. And see if you can implement a policy at your workplace that would encourage safe driving in the parking lot and beyond. Here are some useful resources that might get you started:

Miller Safety Reverse Driving Toolbox Talk

Avoiding Backing Accidents from the Iowa Local Technical Assistance Program at ISU

Safety Serve Online Defensive Driving Course from the National Safety Council

UnityPoint Health
Des Moines