

KYTC Department of Highways Backing Safety & Spotter Policy Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

Q: “Are the magnetic ribbon flags intended just for equipment or is that applicable to passenger vehicles, as well?”

A: *Magnetic ribbons are to be used on **all** Department of Highways vehicles. If the vehicle has an aluminum body, they shall be placed on bumpers. A lot of private companies and other DOT's use cones to serve this same purpose (which is to perform a 360 degree walk-around). Magnetic ribbons are smaller, easier to maneuver and more cost effective.*

Q: “Will the magnetic ribbon flags be made available and kept inside each vehicle?”

A: *Ribbons will be distributed throughout the state as soon as they arrive. All offices or divisions will receive enough to have 2 for each vehicle. Yes, they are to be kept in the vehicle when not in use. Needed replacements will be stocked at the Equipment Warehouse.*

Q: “What if the magnetic ribbons are not in place when you first get into a vehicle? That would imply the previous driver did not affix them as intended or they were stolen. Is the new driver to report the issue as a failure of the previous driver?”

A: *Issues involving missing ribbons can be addressed with your supervisor.*

Q: “The policy says to park so that your initial movement when leaving the parking space is forward rather than backing. Does that mean we should not park state vehicles in the angled pull-in parking spaces in the garage? What if there are no perpendicular spaces available that could be backed into to allow for initial forward movement?”

A: *There will be circumstances in which this protocol is not practical; in those cases, park in the safest available area and utilize a spotter to assist with backing out, if one is available.*

Q: “The policy says to park in “designated spots or safe areas away from other vehicles.” So, basically, where should we park state vehicles?”

A: *Regarding “park in designated spots or safe areas away from other vehicles,” we have had situations where employees pull up near the front door of a facility or store—often in a non-designated area—just to run inside briefly. Because drivers do not expect vehicles to be parked there, this has led to incidents where those vehicles are backed into.*

“Away from other vehicles” means choosing an available parking space that is not tightly surrounded by cars in a crowded lot. If there are open spaces farther away from traffic and congestion, employees should take the extra time to park there and walk a short distance, rather than parking in high-traffic or non-designated areas.

Q: “Do employees need a spotter if they are parallel parking a state vehicle?”

A: *Our policy requires that we avoid unnecessary backing, however when it is required the driver must ask a coworker to act as a spotter IF a person is nearby and available (including the passenger(s)). There is no specific exception for parallel parking. My hope is that parallel parking would be avoided and only used as a last resort in general. If it is the only feasible option, considering parallel parking would require the spotter to exit the vehicle prior to parking some judgement is required. If parallel parking within an off-street parking area if the spotter can exit the vehicle without being exposed to traffic then they should be the backing spotter, but if*

parallel parking on-street the driver would need to wait for the passenger to exit to be the spotter, which may contribute unnecessary risk of injury from being struck by traffic so in case of on-street parallel parking I'm okay with no spotter as the less-risky option.

Q: "If an employee backs into a parking space, or pulls through a space to park so no backing is needed to leave, does the driver still need to use the magnetic flags if they are part of a backing policy? If so why?"

A: *Yes, the magnetic flags are to be used every time the vehicle is parked, the policy doesn't have exceptions. This is not just a backing policy, it is a policy to avoid collisions with objects during the initial movement from a parked condition.*

The purpose of the flags is to get the employee to complete a circle around the vehicle looking for problems or obstacles that they may have not noticed when parking or that may have developed while parked. We have many incidents of employees hitting objects while moving forward and/or turning out of a parked position, not just during backing movements. If we use the flags every time we park, and make a 360 walkaround check every time we prepare to leave the parking spot we will develop the habit much more quickly.

Q: "Our crew is concerned that if they sign the acknowledgement form, and then later had a backing incident that they would be in trouble. Is that true?"

A: *Signing the acknowledgment only confirms that you have reviewed and understand the policy. Compliance with the policy ensures there are no issues; failure to comply may result in disciplinary action. Please note that disciplinary action may still be taken in response to any incident, regardless of whether an acknowledgement form was signed or not.*

Q: "Do we always have to have a spotter?"

A: *A spotter must be used whenever one is available. If no spotter is present and backing is the only viable option, backing is permitted. However, every effort should be made to avoid backing whenever possible.*

Q: "What do I do if I don't have a spotter?"

A: *If no spotter is present and backing is the only viable option, backing is permitted. However every effort should be made to avoid backing whenever possible.*

Q: How do we comply with the policy until we receive the magnetic flags?

A: *The magnetic flags are not required until distributed statewide. Once distribution is complete, use of the magnetic flags will be required.*