



The darker side of human nature found in car parks, says AA Insurance

Auckland – 26 November 2008 – As New Zealanders get ready for the Christmas shopping season, AA Insurance has revealed New Zealand drivers often show their worst side in car parks.

The 2008 AA Insurance Drivers Index, which surveyed 2,573 New Zealand drivers aged 18-75, reported that car parks are a frustrating place for drivers, which sometimes boils over in rudeness such as impatience, stealing someone else's car park, and ignoring the legal obligation to admit damaging someone else's property.

The majority of New Zealanders surveyed (72 percent) have experienced returning to their parked car to find it damaged. Worse, most (88 percent) say the person who did the damage did not leave their contact details.

Yet only one in six drivers (16 percent) say they would think twice about leaving their details if they damaged a car without being seen.

“Every year AA Insurance receives thousands of claims from customers who have been unfortunate enough to find their parked car with broken lights or mirrors, dented panels and scratched paint, and that the person who caused the damage did not leave their details,” says Martin Fox, Deputy General Manager, AA Insurance. “There is a legal responsibility to own up if you damage another person's vehicle.”

“This matters because if we don't know who did the damage, we can't contact them or their insurer to manage the claim. This means you're more likely to have to pay the excess and it might also affect your no claims record.”

AA Insurance's claims records show that claims for cars damaged in a car park are fairly common, with the most frequent cause being a car reversing into another car parked behind them or which has stopped and waited behind them. In most cases it is the reversing driver's fault.

“Often the driver looks around, puts the car into gear and then begins reversing, but while the driver was putting the car in gear another car or person has moved up behind them,” says Martin.

Other causes for car park collisions include hitting oncoming vehicles, trolleys, walls and poles.

AA Insurance estimates that the average damage caused by a car park prang is worth \$1,200.

New Zealanders’ lack of car park etiquette extends to rudely stealing parks, with over half those surveyed (53 percent) saying they have had another driver steal their car park while obviously waiting for the park. And while 92 percent think it is wrong to use a disabled space without a permit, 82 percent said they have seen people without permits use these spaces.

AA Insurance’s guide to car park etiquette

1. Take it easy. Many car park accidents are caused by frustration and impatience
2. When reversing into or out of a park, go slowly and don’t just rely on your mirrors – look over your shoulder too, including after you’ve put the car into gear
3. Play your part to keep the car park free of hazards by returning your shopping trolley
4. Use indicators every time you make a turn
5. Don’t pull out around cars that are waiting to drive into a parking space – be patient and give them room to move
6. If you are involved in a collision and hit another parked vehicle, do the right thing and leave a note with your details
7. If you witness a collision, pass on any information you have to the innocent party
8. If your car is damaged and no one has left a note, do report it to the car park security or mall firm – they may have CCTV which might have captured the incident.

ENDS

About AA Insurance

AA Insurance was launched in 1994 and is a joint venture between New Zealand Automobile Association and Suncorp-Metway Limited.

AA Insurance has over 300 staff servicing 130,000 plus customers and manages almost 300,000 policies. Over half of those policies cover motor insurance risks including cars, bikes, caravans, and motor homes, and the remainder are house and contents insurance.

AA Insurance Limited has an A+ (Strong) insurer financial strength rating given by Standard and Poor’s (Australia) Pty Ltd on 17 May 2008. For further information visit www.aainsurance.co.nz

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