

Valet parking

A wide variety of organizations and companies at times provide valet parking service for their visitors, members or guests. Although the valet drivers will have no passengers and travel at relatively slow speeds to park the vehicle, this activity creates the risk of loss to your organization. The following information discusses methods of minimizing the risk of loss when valet parking service is offered.

Written Policies and Procedures

Documented policies and procedures should be in place and communicated to those who perform valet parking activities. Procedures should include required qualifications; age requirement; minimum acceptable driving record; rules for safe driving and parking; procedures for taking vehicles, tagging keys, recording location of parking space, inspecting vehicles, and protecting keys from theft.

Screening of Valet Drivers

Ideally, people driving for your organization should be at least 21 years of age. However, in many of the settings where valet parking is offered, it may not be possible to find staff of the ideal age for this activity. Regardless of age, the Motor Vehicle Records (MVR) of those considered for valet driving tasks should be reviewed prior to assignment to these responsibilities. This can be easily facilitated on short notice by submitting the person's name, driver license number, and date of birth to your insurance agent or broker. The following criteria should be followed:

FOR PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYEES, EXAMPLES OF ACCEPTABLE MVRs INCLUDE:

- No major violations in the past three years
- Maximum of two moving violations with one at-fault accident
- Maximum of three moving violations in the past three years with no at-fault accidents
- Maximum of two at-fault accidents in the past three years with no moving violations

FOR CURRENT EMPLOYEES, EXAMPLES OF MVRs THAT CAUSE REVOCATION OF DRIVING PRIVILEGES INCLUDE:

- Conviction for driving while impaired (DWI) within the last three years.
- Conviction for death by vehicle, hit and run, racing, careless and reckless driving or other major offenses.
- Conviction of more than three ordinary traffic violations, or no more than two chargeable accidents, or more than two violations in past 12-month period.
- Suspension or revocation of driver's license within the last three years.

Valet Driver Training/Orientation

The following items/rules should be discussed with all valet drivers:

- Note and document any vehicle damage prior to driving vehicle
- Adjust the seat so that you can properly reach the pedals
- Use the seat belt— if you were to brace yourself with your arms in a 15 mph crash, the force is the same as that of catching a 100-pound bag dropped from a second story window!
- Look over both shoulders prior to moving the vehicle to identify pedestrians or vehicles nearby
- Do not make sudden starts or drive over 10 mph
- Do not drive a manual (stick) transmission unless you are very familiar with its operation
- Be aware that slick spots may be present under leaves, in shaded areas or where there are puddles
- Use turn signals to indicate where you intend to turn
- Avoid backing where possible. Plan (straight stall) parking so that vehicles can be driven through spaces so they face out of stall. Where backing is necessary, back in, so vehicle is facing out of stall.
- Allow extra space next to vehicles with long doors (2-door vehicles)
- Once vehicle is parked, ensure that wheels are positioned straight ahead so that the next driver does not drift into the adjacent car when they begin to move
- When vehicles must be backed, roll down the window and keep the radio off so you can hear if someone warns you of impending danger, or if you begin to contact something

Valet Driver Skills Evaluation

Conduct some trial valet parking prior to the arrival of guests. Observe that driver follows the above procedures and review any areas that are incorrect or behavior that is unsafe. During the event and actual valet parking, someone of authority should monitor valet activities to ensure rules are followed.

Conclusion

Injuries during valet parking activities are rare, but damage to vehicles occurs all too often. Although vehicles are rarely totaled during these activities, vehicle damage can be very costly and jeopardize your relationship with your members or guests. Your organization is responsible for damage to those vehicles when under your valet driver's control, and therefore should make every possible effort to minimize the risk of accident.

