

The guideline requires one bay for every 500 sq ft of gross floor area

Handling car parks in shopping malls

- **Management** must prepare and manage secure and safe parking facilities for shoppers' convenience
- **At least 7%** of bays must be reserved for solo woman drivers



Guest writer

by **Anthony Dylan**

BUILDING a commercial space like a shopping mall requires planning and adherence to guidelines of the local government in which the property is sited.

A mall, for instance, needs to provide car park bays and the general guidelines stipulated by the local governments are as follows:

- One bay for every 500 sq ft of gross floor area;
- One motorcycle bay for every 905 sq ft of gross floor area; and
- An additional 2% on top of the overall bays provided for the physically challenged, which should be located near elevators. Ramps and railings must also be provided.

In addition, a general rule since 2013 requires 7% of bays to be reserved for solo woman drivers. Many malls have started complying with this rule which was spawned from a tragic incident in a car park in 2003.

Security measures have since been taken seriously with more security guards for car parks as well as CCTV cameras at entry and exit points. The cameras must capture three angles – face, licence plate and overall face. Panic buttons, including intercoms and CCTV activation, have also been installed.

Car park ambience

Due to the typical 2.1m height restriction, lighting is an important aspect of car park ambience – about 200 lux at intersections

and higher at lobby areas.

It should be of the daylight type for better vision and identification. Surveillance and line of sight are also key elements for car park safety. Proper and well-defined walkways behind each bay as well as crossings to vertical transportation facilities are also compulsory.

The use of epoxy flooring material also adds to a better and brighter outlook. Many older malls have started upgrading their flooring while some new ones still use the traditional concrete surface. An epoxy flooring creates a cheerful ambience for users.

Cashless parking, guidance systems

Cashless parking is the way forward in line with contactless ATM cards, debit and credit cards.

Car park guidance and better air quality management systems would soon be the norm too. However, licence plate recognition systems have yet to be widely used as car registration plates generally do not conform to standard designs.

The authorities must enforce the use of standardised car registration plates to hasten the

implementation of licence plate recognition systems. This will enhance car park security and also help users who may have forgotten where they have parked their vehicles.

Bay configurations

The standard size of a parking bay is 5m x 2.5m. Generally, there are three bays between two pillars, but some malls have four as the span between pillars is wider due to construction design. Some malls have pillars chamfered to prevent sharp edges, which are better than placing corner guards.

Vehicle sizes dictate the dimensions of parking bays. Typically, sedan cars, MPVs and SUVs fit into 5m x 2.5m bays. However, bays for the physically challenged are almost double that size.

For larger vehicles such as a Toyota Hilux, which is at least 5.3m long, the front or rear would protrude out of the bay. To counter this, back-to-back bays should have a 1m clearway.

Some malls also consider the needs of owners of hybrid vehicles and electric vehicles by providing charging ports. Others provide free two-hour parking for those on the go.

A number of malls have also added premier or premium parking facilities to create a differentiated experience for users.

Security and safety

It is the duty of mall owners and management to prepare and manage secure and safe car park facilities.

The rationale of providing designated parking areas for solo woman drivers in the name of security is wrong as car parks should, in the first place, be secure and safe for everybody, regardless of gender.

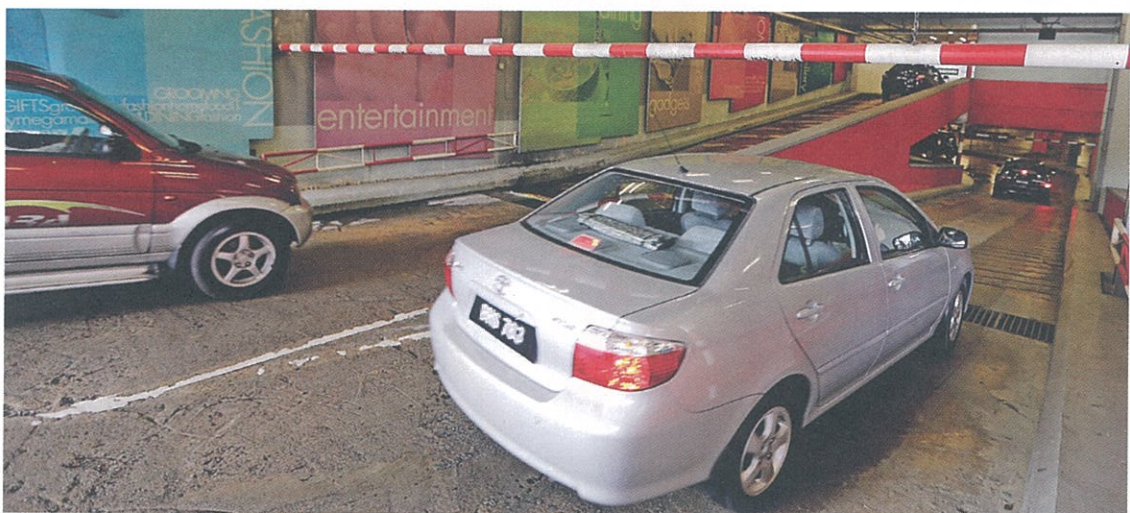
Bays reserved for the physically challenged should also be extended to pregnant women, the elderly or those in need of physical assistance, including families with infants and children. Such locations should also be manned instead of being locked up. Requiring drivers to call for assistance if they want to use these bays, just like toilet facilities for the physically challenged, is extremely inconvenient.

Mall owners and managers must recognise that providing safe and secure parking is for shoppers' convenience, not to make money.

Good ambience using epoxy flooring and daylight lightings, as well as providing distress call points, buggy services, an effective way to locate vehicles and regular patrolling help create that safe and secure feeling. **FocusM**

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Most malls now have more security guards and CCTV cameras