

Safety Bulletin

Planning Ahead to Find Safe Overnight Parking

Finding a safe place for overnight parking is a national concern. The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) 2015 Truck Parking Survey found that 90 percent of drivers say they have problems finding safe, available parking at night.

The survey also found significant shortages in the Northeast. Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia are among the states with the most serious parking shortages, and popular Interstates such as I-95, I-80 and I-81 are among the top five nationwide in terms of parking shortages.

The survey was mandated under Jason's Law, named for Jason Rivenburg, a truck driver who was murdered in March 2009 while he was parked at an unlit, abandoned gas station in South Carolina. Jason's Law passed in 2012 and pledges to update many of the nation's rest areas, yet that process will take time.



While finding a well-lit and secure area to park remains a challenge, it's not impossible. Proper planning can make all the difference. Here are some guidelines to follow:

- **Know what's safe** – Well-lit commercial truck stops and rest areas are the safest places to park in most states. Avoid grocery store or shopping mall parking lots, especially at businesses that are closed or abandoned. Also, do not sleep off highway ramps or shoulders.
- **Know your route** – Take note of what truck stops and rest areas are on your route, and plan for when you might need them.
- **Act early** – Many truck stops will fill up quickly, sometimes well before sunset. If you call the truck stop you plan to use early in that afternoon, you can get an idea of how full the lot is and change plans if the lot is already filling up.
- **Choose safety over convenience** – At the truck stop, be sure you park straight, and choose a pull-through spot if at all possible so you don't have to worry about backing up. Find the best-lit location. Avoid parking at the end of a row or in any area that could make you vulnerable to a collision. And use your four-way flashers while navigating into your parking spot. Remember, most drivers are tired at night, so a little extra safety goes a long way.