



Fire Department

We all know that parking in a fire lane is illegal. Yet, many citizens do just that every day. The space outside of a business is not a loading zone if it is designated as a fire lane; it is not a special use parking space, nor is it a place to wait for passengers to exit the building. So, what is the fire lane for?

The fire lane is an area reserved for fire apparatus responding to an emergency to stage, or park, at a useful distance from a structure. Put simply, the fire lane is the department's launch pad for interior firefighting or other emergency response. You would not want to park on the launch pad of a space craft or an aircraft carrier! The same idea applies to the fire lane.

If the building is on fire, the fire lane gives the fire department adequate space to conduct firefighting operations and establish water supply. If the building has a sprinkler system, you may have seen the big connectors labeled "FDC" outside. That means **F**ire **D**epartment **C**onnection, and it is where the firefighters hook their hoses into the sprinkler system to supply the sprinklers with water. The less hose firefighters have to lay, the less loss of water pressure and the less risk of damage to the hose. Imagine if the firefighters have to lay a hose line from the third row of the parking lot to a building; think how many opportunities motorists have to burst that hose by driving over it. If the trucks are parked close to the building, there are fewer opportunities for damage to hoselines.

Cars parked illegally in fire lanes also make evacuation difficult, if not impossible. Many of the emergency exits will open into the fire lane for rapid dispersal of patrons within. Additionally, cars in the fire lane are within what firefighters call the "collapse zone." If the building falls from fire damage, the majority of the debris will fall within that fire lane.

Another reason to keep the fire lane clear is its use by EMS. Again, parking the ambulance rows away slows response time to the emergency. This goes for police responses as well. For this reason, think of the fire lane as an "Emergency Vehicle Lane."

Now that we know why the fire lane exists, let us talk about what excuses people use for violating the law:

1. "I'll only be inside for a minute." Fire doubles in size every 30 seconds to a minute. Besides, even if you have the best of intentions, how many of us can enter and exit a business in ONE MINUTE? Would you want to be responsible for your neighbors dying in a structure, or losing their life's work and business because the fire lane was blocked?
2. "I'm waiting for someone." Wait in the parking lot, and when the person you are waiting for exits, then drive up to the curb to pick them up.

3. "I have to pick up a big item and load it in my car (or truck)." Use the stores' loading area, not the fire lane, to pick up large items or load trucks. If the store does not have a designated loading zone, ask them to use a side door or loading dock to load your merchandise. A stopped car or truck, for whatever reason, is an obstacle to emergency response.
4. "I am handicapped." Or, "I have a handicapped passenger." Use designate handicapped parking. It is safer for you and your passengers. If need be, drop your passenger off, and then park legally.

Finally, let us talk about the cost to the driver of the vehicle. Did you know that the fine for a first offense parking in a fire zone is \$50? Did you know that the second offense **doubles** the fine to \$100? And the third offense **doubles** again - \$200! Is it worth that kind of money to break the law and park in a fire lane?

The next time you are tempted to park in a fire lane and "run inside for just one minute", think about this article, and your wallet. As always, for more information, call the City of Newton Fire Department at 695-4284.