

Community Comment
May 26, 2015

This is Erin Dunn of the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a Community Comment.

What is the definition of a compact car? This past month while staying in a few different motels in Sonoma and Mendocino counties, a Chevy Suburban and Toyota Sequoia both thought they were a compact car. At least they parked in spaces clearly marked Compact Car.

It's not so much the out-and-out thumbing of their nose at the rules that bothers me, it's the unintended consequences that they create.

At one motel, I was unable to park my car in the lot because not one, but two, really large vehicles parked in spots marked Compact Car. I could squeeze in to the spot next one of them, but couldn't open my door to get out. And, if I had indeed managed to wriggle out of the six-inch car door opening, my own car would have been banged up by their doors when they tried to get in. So really, they each took up two spots by parking their cars in what I feel is an illegal fashion. (And if it isn't illegal, it should be!) I left notes on both SUV windows scolding them for being inconsiderate and parking in an unmistakably marked compact car slot. (That's probably illegal but it made me feel better!)

It's not a phenomenon exclusively found in motel parking lots. I also had a similar experience recently while trying to park on Main Street in Fortuna one morning. One of the huge pick-up trucks that Humboldt is famous for was parked in marked space and clearly didn't fit. This wasn't even a Compact Car space, just a regular street space. The truck spilled over into the next spot. And there was a car parked in the spot ahead of that. So while I could fit in the space that was left, the huge truck would not have been able to get out because there was a car parked behind him. (I say "him" because I saw who got in the truck.) I was tempted to do it so I could watch him inch up and back for 20-minutes—

thinking I was teaching him a lesson. But I wasn't teaching anyone a lesson. And it would ultimately be my car that ended up with a dent or scratch.

Maybe it's because I have a new small car—a Honda FIT—and I used to drive a Camry that I parked like a compact car. Now I can fit (no pun intended) into smaller spaces and maybe I'm like the proverbial reformed smoker—I can't stand to be around anyone else who smokes. Or in this case, people who don't fit in the car spaces.

It makes me think--do the powers that be making decisions about parking spot sizes live in a world filled only with the Toyota Yaris and Ford Focus?

Mike Johnson with the City of Fortuna, told me it is not illegal to park a big truck in a space marked compact car. In his wise words, “you can't legislate courtesy.”

This has been Erin Dunn with a Community Comment.