

KidsAndCars.org – Preventing Backover Accidents

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Help Prevent Backover Accidents with These Safe Backing Up Tips

There's an old saying that some things can't be helped, but thankfully, backover accidents aren't one of them. Backover tragedies happen far too often, claiming the lives of at least two children in the U.S. every week (*source: KidsAndCars.org*). Yet, they can be minimized by heightened awareness and safe driving practices.

We all know children can be hard to see when you're behind the wheel and driving in reverse. However, there are tangible ways to dramatically reduce your chances of harming a child in a backover accident.

Recognize that your driveway is a danger zone. KidsAndCars.org reports that most backover incidents occur in a residential driveway or parking lot and involve a parent or other close relative. Look for ways to make your driveway safer. Keep landscaping trimmed to increase visibility and make sure your children and their friends don't play in the driveway. Be sure to remove toys, scooters and other things in the driveway that could tempt your kids to dart behind a vehicle that's moving backward.

Use all the tools at your disposal. Many newer vehicles come equipped with rear-mounted cameras that can help make driving in reverse safer. Cross-view mirrors and audible proximity alarms can help as well, but don't rely on technology tools alone—they are not a substitute for being alert and vigilant. Become an expert at using your rearview mirrors and figure out what they will and won't show you when you're backing up.

Make sure all your drivers know their blind zones. Realize that you have blind zones (all drivers and vehicles do) and how you can overcome them. And, keep in mind that potential blind zones will vary significantly by the height of the driver and the size of the vehicle. If you're like many families, you have a multi-vehicle, multi-driver home, so your reverse driving safety program should involve every driver knowing exactly where their potential blind zones will be in each vehicle. Practice together as a team and test yourself, your teen driver and your driving baby sitters to see how the view—and blind zones—change as you continue to back up.

Know where your children are before moving your vehicle. Many backover incidents result from children following a parent outside and standing behind the vehicle, unseen and unheard (*source: KidsAndCars.org*). That's why it's imperative that you look behind and under your vehicle before backing up. Also, if your family ever backs the car out of the garage before everyone gets in, make sure you have a firm grasp on any young children so they don't scamper away from you and toward danger. KidsAndCars.org reports that toddlers (12 to 23 months old) are the most frequent victims of backover tragedies because, while they have learned to walk, they still have little concept of danger or understand when they might have put themselves in harm's way. Watch toddlers carefully whenever they are near a vehicle and never move a vehicle if children are not being actively and properly supervised.

Realize that new technology can increase risks. Remote starters and openers are convenient for us, but they can be deadly in young hands who might think they are toys. So, put your remotes and keys in places where kids can't get them. Also, get in the habit of keeping your car locked and engaging your emergency brake to keep curious children from harming themselves.

The risk of backover tragedies can be reduced with your focus and attention. Always back up slowly and deliberately, pausing to take a second look. Remember that it's no time to be in a hurry.

For more tips on keeping kids safe in and around cars, check out this article:

http://community.allstate.com/community/allstate_blog/blog/2011/09/13/going-back-to-school-safely

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