

Child-safety group: Deadly 'back-over' accidents preventable

Second Salinas child in four months accidentally run over on Sunday

9:00 PM, Jan. 24, 2012 | Written by [Andy Stiny](#)



This photo shows how an entire pre-school class can not be seen behind a large SUV. / Photo provided by KidsAndCars.org

In the second incident of its kind in four months, a relative fatally backed over a toddler in Salinas on Sunday in a tragedy that child safety advocates say is preventable if the driver could have seen the danger. That's why advocates want "back-up" cameras installed in new vehicles to cover blind spots an unwitting driver misses with tragic results for a rambling toddler.

The Kids Transportation Safety Act, signed into law by president George Bush in 2008, awaits final review by the federal Office of Management and Budget.

"I hope that (the new regulation) will reduce greatly the number of children and adults that are being injured or killed," said Janette Fennell, founder and president of the child safety group KidsAndCars.org.

But on Sunday a toddler, just short of her second birthday, became another grim statistic.

Rachel Salinas, 1, was backed over and killed in her Fuji Lane driveway by her father, who did not see her, the CHP said.

"He didn't realize she had left their home," officer Robert Lehman said on Tuesday. The investigation could take three weeks or longer, he said.

"These tragedies are truly heart-wrenching — but also preventable," according to the website saferoads.org.

Statistics show that at least 50 children are backed over each week in the U.S. and two of those die from their injuries, according to information from KidsAndCars.

The predominant age is 12 to 23 months. Sixty percent of the incidents involve larger trucks or SUVs and in 70 percent of the cases a parent or relative is the driver, the statistics reveal.

Sunday's death involved a 2005 Chevrolet Tahoe.

In September, a 17-month-old girl was backed over and killed in her home's driveway on Josephine Street when a relative driving an SUV did not see her, police said. "We shouldn't have to back up blindly," Fennell said.

"It makes absolutely no sense for 100 years we have been manufacturing motor vehicles and there has been no regulation about what you should be able to see when you are backing up your vehicle," she said.

The 2008 law, officially titled the Cameron Gulbransen Kids Safety Transportation Act, required the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to set a rear visibility standard for vehicles.

NHTSA did that and said the only way to meet the standard "was to have a rear-view camera" in vehicles, said Amber Rollins, executive assistant for KidsAndCars.

A NHTSA spokesman did not return a call for comment.

The OMB is working through the regulations and is expected to announce a final rear-view standard next month.

KidsAndCars hopes that in 2013 a certain percentage of new vehicles will be required to have the rear-view cameras, said Rollins.

"It (the camera requirement) is something the consumer wants," said Rollins, but some people have issues about the costs involved in new regulations.

She said the rear-camera regulation was an issue for Speaker of the House John Boehner, R-Ohio.

"Our bill is on his list of concerns," Rollins said.

The economic effects of the rear-view cameras would be "significant" for foreign trade agreements with the European Union and NAFTA, according to a summary on the NHTSA website.

Delays in implementing the new rule occur because "additional coordination" is needed.

Blind spots for backing vehicles are a "huge problem," Rollins said.

"Every single vehicle has a blind zone behind it and the driver is unable to avoid hitting what they can't see."

<http://www.thecalifornian.com/article/20120125/NEWS01/201250305/Child-safety-group-Deadly-back-over-accidents-preventable?odyssey=nav%7Chead>