

Rear-view cameras could have saved tot, Iowa mom says

Daniel P. Finney, The Des Moines Register 9:38p.m. EDT April 10, 2013



Iowa mom whose son was run over by car wants rear visibility cameras in new vehicles. (Photo: Mary Chind, The Des Moines Register)

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Karen Pauly's son was killed in a driveway accident two years ago in Iowa**
- **Pauly and other parents will meet with lawmakers to discuss rear-view cameras in cars**
- **Requiring the cameras could add as much as \$200 to the price of a new vehicle**

DeWITT, Iowa — Little Jack Pauly wanted to go with mommy and his big sister to the store.

That's what his mother, Karen Pauly, believes, nearly two years after the tragedy that took Jack away forever. She had loaded her daughter, Lily, then age 3½, into the car seat in the back of the family's mid-size SUV. She backed out of the driveway.

"Lily said, 'I think you hit something,'" Karen Pauly remembers.

Pauly found 19-month-old Jack in the driveway, badly injured. She had backed over her son.

She screamed for help. Her husband, Patrick, bolted out of their house. He ran their toddler next door to his parents' house, where his mother, a nurse, tried to save Jack's life. A helicopter ambulance flew Jack to the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City.

"But the doctor took us into a room and explained that the damage was too much," said Pauly, whose family lives in rural DeWitt.

When Karen and Patrick Pauly were getting dressed for Jack's funeral and had a TV on in the background. It aired a public service announcement for a group called KidsandCars.org, a nonprofit, nonpartisan group that lobbies for automobile safety legislation to help prevent tragedies like the one that took Jack's life.

"My mother said, 'It's a sign. You've got to do that,'" Karen Pauly said.

Pauly will be one of a half-dozen parents sharing their stories with lawmakers and federal transportation officials at noon Thursday in Washington, D.C. They want the U.S. Department of Transportation to create standards for rear visibility in new vehicles.

Former President George W. Bush signed the Cameron Gulbransen Kids Transportation Safety Act in February 2008. One of the provisions of the law requires the U.S. DOT to issue standards to address blind zones in vehicles that prevent drivers from seeing children and other pedestrians when backing up.

The law is named for the 2-year-old son of a Bellport, N.Y., couple who died in 2002 when his father backed over him while moving a car in the family's driveway.

The review standards were supposed to be in place by February 2011, but have yet to be issued. Pauly and members of KidsAndCars.org want the rules to require backup cameras to help cover the blind spots directly behind a vehicle. KidsAndCars.org estimates that as many as 1,002 children died from 1990 to 2010 by being backed over by a vehicle. Fourteen of those deaths occurred in Iowa, the organization says.

The activists believe the data underestimates the magnitude of the safety issue because there is no national standard for collecting backover data.

One of the stumbling blocks for requiring backup cameras is cost. The U.S. DOT estimates requiring the devices would add as much as \$200 to the price of a new vehicle.

However, Jackie Gillan, president of advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, said she believes "these costs are greatly inflated."

"When rear-view cameras become standard equipment, the price will drop dramatically," she said.

According to Edmunds.com, a privately held automotive information firm, 70 percent of 2012 model year vehicles have backup cameras available on one package or more.

However, the cameras alone won't eliminate safety risks when people are directly behind a vehicle, safety experts argue.

"A huge issue is driver expectation," said Daniel McGehee, director of the Human Factors and Vehicle Safety Research Program at the University of Iowa, which studies crash data. "If the driver does not expect anyone to be behind the vehicle, they're going to behave differently than if they do."

For example, a driver backing out of a parking space at a grocery store or Little League park might be more mindful of the likelihood of children behind the vehicle than other venues, McGehee said.

Karen Pauly, though, swears by her rear-view camera. Days after her son's funeral, her husband traded in her SUV for a newer model with a backup camera.

Pauly knows she won't be able to prevent every tragedy. She knows nothing will bring back her son. But she believes a requirement of backup cameras will save lives and might have saved her son.

That's why she tells her story often and to anyone who will listen, even though it hurts every time.

"If we can prevent just one more, then it's worth it," she said. "I don't want anyone to have to feel what I've felt."

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/04/10/car-rear-view-cameras/2072611/>