

Safety advocates want action on back-over accidents

Obama Administration has not enacted safety measure passed in 2008

04/12/2013 | ConsumerAffairs | Family & Parenting, By Daryl Nelson, daryl.nelson@consumeraffairs.com / 866-773-0221



Ellen Adams

Behind a podium, near the steps of Capitol Hill, Florida resident Ellen Adams spoke about the day her life changed forever.

On September 9, 2003, Ellen's husband Matthew accidentally backed over their one-year-old daughter Ashleigh when she wandered behind his car as he backed out of the family driveway.

Sadly, the tragedy wouldn't end there for Ellen, as Matthew committed suicide years later.

Since that time, Ellen and many others have been trying to get the Obama Administration to enact a rear visibility rule for all newly-made vehicles, as authorized by the Cameron Gulbransen Kids Transportation Safety Act, signed into law by President

George W. Bush back in 2008.

The act was created to protect children from non-traffic-related accidents, like arms getting caught in electronic windows and drivers accidentally backing over children. President Obama supported the measure when he was in the Senate but his Administration has never enacted the rules necessary to implement it.

At the news conference, Ms. Adams joined several other parents who lost children in back-over accidents, hoping to bring pressure on the Administration to act.

Action, then nothing

Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.) recalled that while it was a struggle to get the bill passed, he had expected that it would be put into effect quickly.



"It was hard enough getting the bill passed" he said. "Then we thought it was going to be a matter of days, weeks, months for the standards and rules to be put into effect. Now it's five years later and it still has not gotten done."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 50 children a week are backed over by vehicles and 70% of the time the driver is the parent of the child.

And out of those 50 children in back-over accidents, 48 are treated in emergency rooms and two die. Each year, there are about 228 deaths and 17,000 injuries where children are involved in back-over incidents.

Critics say the auto industry is reluctant to add things like rearview cameras and backup sensors to vehicles because of high costs.

But according to Jacke Gillan, President of Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, much of the auto industry seems to be on board with making motor vehicles safer with these added features.

"This law had the support of the auto industry, the safety community and families," Gillan said. "We have inexpensive and effective technological solutions, consumer support, and now we need government action."

Available and affordable

Joan Claybrook, president emeritus, Public Citizen and former Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), agreed.

Cameron Gulbransen

"Rearview cameras are available and affordable. Many auto manufacturers are making them standard equipment on new makes and models," she said. "Rearview cameras as standard equipment will save lives and save consumers hundreds of dollars in potential repair costs when



they can actually see when backing up. Every day of delay costs consumers and puts children at risk." Janette Fennell, President of Kids and Cars, made her own plea to the Administration to put the law into effect. "It is clear from so many other actions that President Obama has the safety of our children as a top priority," she said. "We urge the President to take one simple step today and issue the rear visibility rule. These unacceptable and unnecessary deaths and injuries from back-over incidents must stop."

A powerful story

After the press event concluded, Ellen Adams spoke with ConsumerAffairs about why she had decided to speak out. "I felt that my story was powerful and I needed to speak it because two people passed away," she said. "It destroyed a family and if it has some shock value that's going to help get this law put into effect, that's good for me."

Ms. Adams said if the added safety features had been in her husband's vehicle at the time of the accident, her daughter Ashleigh would still be alive.

"If there was a camera on my car she wouldn't have died," she said. "I don't want anyone else to go through what we went through and the numbers are rising. There are 50 a week injured and two die a week, so I've been with Kids and Cars probably three and a half, four years and the numbers just keep getting higher, more per week, more per week-- so that's another thing that has urged me to really try to push this. I really don't want anyone else to die."

Earlier, Adams said there was only one thing that kept her going through her tragedy.

"People kept asking me after my daughter was backed over and killed and my husband subsequently committed suicide, why I didn't have a nervous breakdown. My response was easy -- who would be left for my son?"

"I urge the President to protect other families from these preventable tragedies, she said."

<http://www.consumeraffairs.com/news/safety-advocates-want-action-on-back-over-accidents-041213.html>