

Paediatric slow-speed non-traffic fatalities: Victoria, Australia, 1985-1995.

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An important group of fatal incidents are slow-speed pedestrian non-traffic incidents to children, which account for 14% of accidental deaths from all causes in Victorian children under 5 years of age between 1985 and 1995, and 12% of pedestrian deaths of all ages. In Victoria, Australia, the database of the state Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Morbidity and Mortality was utilized to identify paediatric slow-speed pedestrian non-traffic-accident deaths in the local population. Additional data relating to the car and its driver, the child, and the circumstances of the incident were abstracted from records kept by the State Coroner and the Victorian compulsory third party traffic injury insurance organization. Twenty eight Victorian children were identified who had died in one of three types of incident (driverless cars, child interacting with the vehicle and driver, and drivers who were unaware of the child's proximity). These incidents were more common in rural areas compared with urban, usually occurring at the child's home. The child was with or near an adult on all occasions. The vehicle was usually being driven by a relative, and was reversing in a higher proportion of 'unaware' incidents compared with the 'interactive' type. The association of 'off-road' family vehicles and trucks with these incidents appears to be increasing, especially in recent years. These findings suggest some countermeasures, including the separation of vehicle driveways from children's play areas, and object vicinity ultrasonic warning devices for vehicles.

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