

[Warning Teen Drivers About “Blindzones”](#)

July 20, 2012 By: Tim Hollister

A teen, at home, suddenly realizes that she is late — for school, sports, an activity, a community event, a family gathering, a date, whatever. She races into the kitchen, grabs the car keys from the basket, jumps into the car, starts the engine, and starts backing down the driveway.

And doesn't look to see if anything or anyone is behind the vehicle, and so doesn't see the toddler playing in the driveway.

This stomach-turning scenario is not too difficult to envision, is it?

At the recent Lifesavers Conference, I stopped by the KidsAndCars booth. The mission of this marvelous organization, www.KidsAndCars.org, based in Kansas, is to educate all drivers about the risks to children of driving, with “blindzones” being one of its main focuses. Blindzones are essential information for teen drivers, but of course the rest of us need to be reminded of it also. Blindzones are one of those safety risks, that, I think, lie just below the surface of our consciousness as drivers and parents, and so reminders are critical.

Every week in the US, at least 50 children are backed over by vehicles because they could not be seen by the driver. In some cases, the driver carefully checked the blind zones before getting into the vehicle but then a toddler wandered into the zone just as the car started rolling. In other words, not every backover is the result of carelessness, but all are a result of the fact that there are places that drivers cannot see.

[Linked are a photo and an illustration that explain the danger.](#) Every vehicle has blindzones in front of and behind the vehicle, with a bigger blindzone behind. The exact length, width and height of the zone varies with the height of the driver, the height of the driver's seat, and the nature of the vehicle, but the area can be anywhere from 20 to 60 feet long. Obviously, SUV's and light trucks, and cars with low suspensions, have the biggest potential blindzones. Among the information I picked up from KidsAndCars was statistics showing that in recent years, the number of blindzone incidents has increased dramatically, which I assume is the result of more SUV's and light trucks being driven by the American public. The KidsAndCars basic fact sheet is found at www.kidsandcars.org/userfiles/dangers/backovers/backover-safety-tips.pdf.

Technology is becoming part of the answer here. My new car has a back up camera, and it is expected that such cameras will become standard on most cars in the next several years. Also, existing vehicles can be retrofitted with backup cameras. As I have already learned, however, even the back up camera doesn't see everything, and it can also be distracting, but it certainly helps.

There is no magic solution here for parents of teen drivers. **Explain to your teen what a blindzone is, and point out approximately how large it is in the front and rear of each car your teen may drive. Then take your teen to the KidsAndCars.org website to view the illustrations, and to read some of the horror stories of drivers who started their vehicles rolling without checking the blindzone.**

My thanks to the folks at KidsAndCars.org for the information and the illustrations, and my salute to them for pursuing this important safety issue.

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