

Mother relives horrifying moment she killed her own daughter by backing up on her

By [DAILY MAIL REPORTER](#) PUBLISHED: 00:46 EST, 27 December 2012 | UPDATED: 10:37 EST, 27 December 2012

A Washington State woman who backed over and killed her 9-year-old daughter a year ago is lobbying the government to improve rear visibility in SUVs so other parents don't have to go through her pain.



Judy Neiman, from Richland, Washington, was at the bank with her daughter Sydnee to deposit the little girl's \$5 allowance when she accidentally backed over her in the family's 2006 Cadillac SUV.

She distinctly remembers the sound of the SUV door slamming and the slight bump as she reversed. In the private hell of a mother's grief, the 53-year-old also still hears the emergency room doctor's sobs as he said Sydnee, who previously had survived multiple open heart surgeries, would not pull through this time.

Tragic: Little Sydnee Neiman, pictured, was killed when her mother Judy backed over her in the family's SUV

'She survived four open heart surgeries. If God had taken her at that time, I could accept it. But who could take it with her being hit by my car? And my hitting her?' Neiman said, clearly still torturing herself about what happened.

Sydnee was carrying her purple plastic piggy bank and account book, so she could deposit the \$5.

After the transaction, Neiman slid behind the wheel and waited for Sydnee, and the neighbor's 10-year-old son who had come on the errand with them.

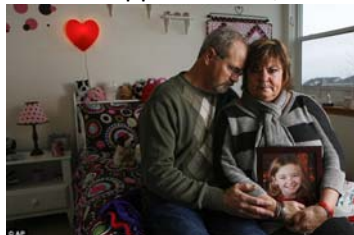
She heard the door slam, then saw the boy sitting on the right side of the back seat as she put the car into reverse.

She figured Sydnee was seated behind the driver's seat. Instead, the boy had gotten in first, telling Sydnee to go around and get in from the left side. He would later tell a police investigator that the girl had dropped her piggy bank on her way around the SUV.

Even if she were upright, at 4-feet-3-inches tall, Sydnee would have been practically invisible through the rear window, the bottom edge of which was a few inches taller than she was.

Neiman knows she can't have Sydnee back but she is begging the government and automakers to help prevent other parents accidentally killing their children.

'They have to do something, because I've read about it happening to other people. I read about it and I said, "I would die if it happens to me,"' Neiman said. 'Then it did happen to me.'



Heartbroken: Paul and Judy Neiman hold a photo of their daughter, Sydnee, in her bedroom at their home in West Richland, Washington

The government estimates such backing crashes kill 228 people every year — 110 of them children age 10 and under — and injures another 17,000.

There is a law in place that calls for new manufacturing requirements to improve the visibility behind passenger vehicles to help prevent the tragedies. Congress passed the measure with strong bipartisan backing, and Republican President George W. Bush

signed it in 2008.

But almost five years later, the standards have yet to be mandated because of delays by the U.S. Department of Transportation, which faced a Feb. 28, 2011, deadline to issue the new guidelines for car manufacturers.

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood has pushed back that deadline three times — promising this past February that the rules would be issued by the end of 2012.

With still no action, safety advocates and anguished parents such as Neiman are asking: What's taking so long to remedy a problem recognized by government regulators and automakers for decades now?

'In a way, it's a death sentence, and for no good reason,' said former Public Citizen president Joan Claybrook, who once directed the federal agency responsible for developing the rules.

The proposed regulations call for expanding the field of view for cars, vans, SUVs and pickup trucks so that drivers can see directly behind their vehicles when in reverse — requiring, in most cases, rearview cameras and video displays as standard equipment.



Dead: Sydnee, pictured in 2010, was at the bank with her mother depositing her allowance when she was killed

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, charged with completing the new standards, declined requests to discuss the delays.

Spokeswoman Karen Aldana said the agency would not comment while the rulemaking process was ongoing but was on track to meet LaHood's latest cutoff date. In a letter to lawmakers in February, LaHood said his agency needed more time for 'research and data analysis' to 'ensure that the final rule is appropriate and the underlying analysis is robust.'

Others insist the issue is money, and reluctance to put any additional financial burdens on an industry crippled by the economic crisis. Development of the new safety standards came even as the Obama administration was pumping billions of dollars into the industry as part of its bailout package.

'They don't want to look at anything that will cost more money for the automobile industry,' said Packy Campbell, a former Republican state lawmaker from New Hampshire who lobbied for the law.

NHTSA has estimated that making rear cameras standard on every car would add \$58 to \$88 to the price of vehicles already equipped with dashboard display screens and \$159 to \$203 for those without them.

The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, a lobbying group that represents automakers, puts the total cost to the industry at about \$2 billion a year. The organization endorsed the 2008 law after a series of compromises.



Call for change: Although there is a law in place that calls for new manufacturing requirements to improve the visibility behind passenger vehicles, the standards have yet to be mandated because of delays by the U.S. Department of Transportation

But last December, eight days after Sydnee Neiman's death, its leader met with White House budget officials to propose a less expensive alternative: reserving cameras for vehicles with extra-large blind zones and outfitting the rest with curved, wide-angle exterior mirrors.

The alliance declined comment, but earlier this year the group's vice president, Gloria Bergquist, told The Associated Press that it urged the government to explore more options as a way to reduce the costs passed on to consumers.

'There are a variety of tools that could be used,' she said, adding that automakers also were concerned that the cumulative effect of federal safety regulations is driving up the average price of a new car, now about \$25,000. Industry analysts also question whether cameras are needed on smaller, entry-level class cars with better rearview visibility.

'It may just be a couple hundred dollars, but it can grow pretty significantly if you are talking about ... an inexpensive car that was not originally conceived to have all these electronics and was only going to have a simple car stereo,' said Roger Lancot, an automotive technology specialist.

Before the delays, all new passenger vehicles were to carry cameras and video displays by September 2014. The industry has now asked for two more years after the final rules are published to reach full compliance.



Vehicle: Judy Neiman holds a photo of her daughter, Sydnee, in front of the 2006 Cadillac Escalade she backed over the little girl in

Despite its resistance, the industry on its own has been installing rearview cameras, a feature first popularized two decades ago in Japan and standard on nearly 70 per cent of new cars produced there this year. In the United States, 44 per cent of 2012 models came with rear cameras standard, and 27 per cent had them as options, according to the

automotive research firm Edmunds.

Nine in 10 new cars had console screens available, according to market research firm iSuppli, which would put the price of adding a camera on the low end of the NHTSA's estimates.

These backing crashes are hardly a new phenomenon. Emergency room doctors, the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the NHTSA have produced dozens of papers on the problem since the 1980s.

Researchers at the University of California, Irvine, started looking into the issue in the 1990s after noticing toddlers showing up in hospital databases of injured child pedestrians. They found that many of those children had been killed or hurt by vehicles backing out of home driveways.

In 1993, the NHTSA sponsored several studies that noted the disproportionate effect of backup accidents on child victims. One report explored sensors and cameras as possible solutions, noting the accidents 'involve slow closing speeds and, thus, may be preventable.' Still another 1993 report estimated that 100 to 200 pedestrians are killed each year from backing crashes, most of them children.



Battler: Sydnee, pictured bottom right with neighborhood friends, had survived four open-heart surgeries

The NHTSA started looking into technology as a solution, but in one proposal — issued in November 2000 — it noted that sensors, cameras and monitors were still expensive and promised to later reevaluate the feasibility of such emerging technologies.

Adding to the scrutiny was the advocacy work of a child safety group called KidsandCars.org, which in 2002 started trying to persuade federal regulators to take on the problem. After the groups' president, Janette Fennell, brought the issue to the attention of Consumer Reports, the magazine started measuring 'blind zones' to determine how far away a toddler-sized traffic cone had to be before a driver looking through the rear window, rearview mirror and side mirrors could see it.

The research found an overall trend of worsening rear visibility — due in part to designs favoring small windows and high trunk lines, said Tom Mutchler, the magazine's automotive engineer.

'Cameras are basically the only technology that is going to let you see something right behind the bumper,' he said. With a growing body of research, better statistics and inaction by regulators, advocates such as KidsandCars.org's Fennell and Sally Greenberg, then with Consumers Union, turned to Congress for a solution.

In 2003, U.S. Rep. Peter King, R-New York, introduced the Cameron Gulbransen Kids and Cars Safety Act, named for a 2-year-old Long Island boy whose pediatrician father backed over him in their driveway. Five years later, it finally became law.

While no one doubts that cameras could help reduce deaths, they aren't regarded as a perfect solution either.

One recent study by a researcher at Oregon State University found that only one in five drivers used a rearview camera when it was available, but 88 per cent of those who did avoided striking a child-sized decoy.

In its proposed rule, the NHTSA estimated that rearview video systems could substantially reduce fatal backing crashes — by at least 95 a year — and result in at least 7,000 fewer injuries.

VIDEO: PSA on safety "Behind your SUV":



<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2253580/Judy-Neiman-relives-moment-killed-daughter-backing--calls-compulsory-reversing-cameras.html#ixzz2GGmOPLGz>