

## Keven Moore: Avoid tragedy of driveway accidents; proceed with caution

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One of the most horrific, unthinkable accidents that can happen to a child can take place less than a few feet from your very own front door. Run-over accidents in your driveway occur too often and are devastating to families, as 70 percent of the time, they involve another family member at the wheel.

The Internet is full of tragic stories of the pain and grief. The heartbreaking part of this is that almost all are preventable with just some additional caution and technology.



Many outdoor activities summon kids to play in the driveway — riding bikes, drawing with chalk, playing basketball or playing with water hoses. But those kid-safe activities can turn from fun to tragedy in just seconds.



Who could ever forget the pain and anguish to Christian singer Steven Curtis Chapman's family back in May of 2008, when their teenage son accidentally ran over and killed his very own sister.

*Annie Mae Clemons*

On my mother's side of the family alone, we have had one fatality and one severe injury involving two of my cousins in two separate driveway incidents decades ago. It's in honor of Annie Mae Clemons that I write this article with the hopes that it may save one child and family from such pain and anguish.

The first family incident involved my uncle who accidentally ran over his toddler son in his very own driveway, resulting in broken bones, emergency surgery, and a year of healing. My cousin was very lucky and eventually healed with few after-effects. But my uncle was left with a huge emotional scar for years.

A few years later, my 3-year-old cousin Annie Mae Clemons wasn't so lucky. On June 2, 1985, as she and her 6-year-old brother Chuck briefly sneaked away to play inside the family car (parked on an inclined driveway), they accidentally knocked the car out of gear, causing it to roll away slowly. As each leaped from the slow rolling vehicle, Annie didn't make it and was killed as she was run-over and struck by the front tire. Within just a very few seconds, their entire family was forever altered.

Both my uncle and aunt were left with unthinkable and unbearable pain of having to bury their own child. My loving Aunt died years later with what I called a broken heart. I couldn't imagine the pain. Chuck was later raised as an only child and went on to serve this great country in the Iraq War as a distinguished US Marine and now is a very protective loving father of his two beautiful young daughters.

I was recently of these past tragic events a few weeks ago, when a similar incident occurred just within steps of my very own back door, in a driveway where all three of my children have played basketball for years. As the daughter of a high school buddy of mine, Bill Smith, and his wife Keri was playing with another neighbor girl, she was accidentally run over by my neighbor as he drove down into his driveway. Due to a blind-spot caused by the incline in his driveway, he was unable to see the 14-year-old girl who happened to be lying on the concrete driveway. She was run over, but by the grace of God the injuries weren't quite so severe, though she was left with some severe bruising and scarring.

According to [www.Keepyourchildsafe.org](http://www.Keepyourchildsafe.org) and [www.Kidsandcars.org](http://www.Kidsandcars.org) around 2,400 kids each year – or approximately 50 children each week — are injured after being struck or run over by a car in a driveway. On average two children die every week, every year from driveway rollover incidents. All told, back-over and front over accidents account for around 64% of all non-traffic related auto fatalities involving children each year.

The most common denominator is that the children share a play area where cars are parked; which is the driveway. Studies also indicate that these incidents occur because of a blind spot. To help prove my point, I encourage you to view this public service announcement from Kids and Cars:

These accidents occur for a variety of reasons but a contributing factor involves the lapse of supervision of children. Being a parent of three kids, I realize it is next to impossible to supervise your children a 100 percent of the time. Kids have been known to break away for a last minute hug or kiss from a parent that may be leaving, while others may be hiding underneath the vehicle.

Newer cars can come equipped with optional backup safety systems to help prevent these types of accidents, and you can also have an older car retrofitted with rear sensors and rearview cameras systems if you so desire. The best system to have is a rearview video system that will give you a wide-angle view of everything behind your car. Backup motion sensors (which beep if something is behind you) are less dependable, but could help improve safety. Remember backup sensors are not infallible and may not sound for a child who isn't moving. Even a camera will not detect a kid playing underneath or around the car, out of its view. These systems improve your visibility when backing out, but shouldn't be used to replace the traditional safe methods of checking around your vehicle before backing.

### **How to Avoid Driveway Roll-over Accidents**

- The No. 1 thing you can do is complete "Circle of Safety" sweep of your vehicle, taking an extra 30 seconds to look around each tire, underneath the vehicle and also in the general vicinity of each direction for any kids that may be nearby (yours or someone else's).
- Warn kids and make them move safety away from your vehicle prior to getting into your vehicle.
- If there are kids present, maintain constant eyesight of them the entire time while backing out your driveway. Stop immediately if you lose sight for even one second.
- Recognize that there are blind spots in front and behind of every vehicle, and become familiar with each. Remember the higher a driver sits in a vehicle and the larger the vehicle, the bigger the blind spot.
- Know where your kids are at all times, check to see where they are before getting in your car to leave.
- Never back out of your driveway in a rush. It doesn't matter how late to work you are, those few seconds you might save rushing to back out is not going to make a substantial difference.
- If your landscaping creates a blind spot remove it or trim it back.
- If you sit idle for even just a few seconds to answer a phone call, it's best to get out to re-check behind your vehicle because conditions can change that quickly, especially if there are kids in the area.
- Make your driveway a toy-free zone. Be sure to keep your driveway /yard clear of toys, balls, sports equipment, or other objects that could tempt a child to dart behind your car.
- Create a separate secure play area for your kids away from the family driveway.
- Teach toddlers and kids at an early age how dangerous vehicles are, that drivers usually cannot see you and to stay far enough away from cars at all times.
- Hold toddlers and young preschoolers when someone is backing out, so they aren't tempted to dart towards a moving vehicle.
- Never leave your child unattended in a vehicle, even when completing the simplest errands.
- Never allow a child to play inside a vehicle and keep your doors locked at all times.
- Always set your parking brake especially if there is any kind of an incline in your driveway.
- When parking on an incline, always turn your wheels towards the curb, that way if it does roll away it will run into the curb and stop.

Remember you can never be too safe when it comes to the safety and health of our children. If it can happen to two of my family members and one of my high school friend's daughters, then it can happen to you. Please be safe.



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