

After blind-spot deaths, groups sue to require rear-view cameras in new cars

September 25, 2013 Jeff Rossen and Josh Davis, TODAY

Video: TODAY's investigative correspondent Jeff Rossen looks into why the government isn't enforcing a law to mandate back-up cameras on all cars, which could help prevent kids from being run over. And now, safety groups are taking action by suing the federal government.

It's the most devastating mistake imaginable: Parents killing their own children when they accidentally back their vehicles over them.

Dozens of children have died in such accidents this year alone. Technology exists that could eliminate drivers' blind spots and prevent the accidents from occurring — so why hasn't the government required it?

Six years ago, Congress mandated a new rear-visibility standard for all new cars and gave the U.S. Department of Transportation a 2011 deadline to get it done. But the reforms have been delayed four times now, and the DOT says it needs until 2015 to put requirements in place.

Now safety groups and victims' families are teaming up to fight for faster results. On Wednesday morning, they are filing a federal lawsuit demanding that the DOT require rear-view cameras in all new vehicles.

"I want to get this implemented so that we can prevent this from happening to any other family," said Casey Jordan, whose husband accidentally backed over their 18-month-old daughter, Skye Renee Jordan, in April 2012.

It happened in a flash when Skye ran out of her family's house in Kansas to say one more goodbye to her Daddy, who was already in his truck. He put the truck into reverse, checked his mirrors and didn't see her in the driveway. He backed right into her.

"I remember just screaming and crying and saying there's no way that this could be happening," Casey Jordan told TODAY.

Skye was rushed to the emergency room, and amazingly, she survived. The little girl is still undergoing extensive treatment on an injured eye.

She's not alone. On average, 18,000 people are injured each year in back-over accidents in the United States, and nearly 300 are killed.

"Everything we need to fix this already exists," said Janette Fennell, president and founder of the safety group [Kids and Cars](#). "We know if you put a rear-view camera in these vehicles, that you can see what's behind you."

U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) told TODAY that he thinks the DOT's delays are "outrageous and unacceptable."

"The Department of Transportation is quite literally breaking the law," Blumenthal said. "It's violating the statute." In a statement to NBC News, the Department of Transportation said more research is needed "to ensure the most protective and efficient rule possible." The DOT acknowledged that rear-view cameras may help save lives and said it is encouraging automakers to install them.

But that's not good enough for victims' families and safety groups, who are moving forward with their lawsuit. Right now, most new cars are sold with reverse cameras as an option, but the cameras often come bundled in expensive packages with other features that cost thousands of dollars. This lawsuit is trying to make the cameras come standard with every new vehicle.

What can people do if they don't have rear-view cameras in their vehicles? First off, try to have someone remain with your children when you leave the house to get in your car in order to make sure they don't run out behind you. Drivers who want extra protection also can buy and self-install camera kits with monitors for a few hundred dollars.

Statement from National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:

"The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) announced today that it will add rearview video systems to its list of recommended features under its New Car Assessment Program (NCAP). The addition to the list of Recommended Advanced Technology Features was made to encourage improved rearview visibility for the nation's motor vehicle fleet and help prevent backover accidents while NHTSA researches implementation of a rear visibility rule.

'As we've seen with other features in the past, adding rearview video systems to our list of recommended safety features will encourage both automakers and consumers to consider more vehicles that offer this important technology," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. "While adding this technology to our list of safety features is important, I remain committed to implementing the rear visibility rule as well.'

NHTSA's NCAP program – widely known for its 5-Star Safety Ratings – highlights for consumers the vehicle makes and models that are equipped with the agency's Recommended Advanced Technology Features that can help drivers avoid crashes and reduce other safety risks. Through the combination of safer vehicles, walkable communities, smart roadway designs, increased public awareness, and working with industry and federal, state and local partners, the Department hopes to reduce deaths and injuries.

NHTSA will be including rearview video systems into the NCAP program in two phases. First, starting today, the agency will begin to identify vehicle models that have rearview video systems. Next, as soon as the agency is able to verify that the vehicle model has a rearview video system meeting certain basic criteria, the agency will recognize those vehicle models as having this Recommended Advanced Technology Feature. In order to be included as a Recommended Advanced Technology Feature, the rearview image must:

- Cover the 20-foot by 10-foot zone directly behind the vehicle;
- Be displayed within two seconds after the reverse direction is selected; and
- Be large enough to enable the driver to make judgments about the objects in the image and avoid a crash with objects.

Rearview video systems will replace Electronic Stability Control as a Recommended Advanced Technology Feature, as the latter technology is now standard on all new vehicles. Forward collision warning (FCW) and lane departure warning (LDW) systems will continue to be featured on the site. Since NHTSA began promoting these technologies, automakers have responded by integrating FCW and LDW into their fleets. LDW systems were available in 51 vehicles in model year 2011, 69 vehicles in model year 2012 and are now available in 124 vehicles in model year 2013. FCW systems were available in 50 vehicles in model year 2011, 79 vehicles in model year 2012 and are now available in 167 vehicles in model year 2013.

'Through today's action we hope to encourage consumers to take advantage of this advanced technology feature that can help save lives," said NHTSA Administrator David L. Strickland. "As drivers rely on these systems, they should remain vigilant especially in situations where pedestrians, bicyclists and children may be present.'

To help prevent future deaths and injuries, especially those involving small children, NHTSA offers [these important safety tips](#).

[Click here for the Federal Register Notice.](#)"

Have an idea for an upcoming edition of *Rossen Reports*? [Email us](#).

<http://www.today.com/news/after-blind-spot-deaths-groups-sue-require-rear-view-cameras-4B11249314>