

# Motorists backing up hurt hundreds of kids yearly

Monday, December 16, 2013 12:00 am | By KENDRICK MARSHALL Tulsa World Staff Writer | 918-581-8386 [kendrick.marshall@tulsaworld.com](mailto:kendrick.marshall@tulsaworld.com)

October French was one of seven Oklahoma children killed this year in accidents in which a vehicle was backing up. French, 1, of Tahlequah died of head injuries on Nov. 28 after she was struck by a 2001 Ford pickup in private driveway just west of Wanetah Drive in Cherokee County.

Amber Rollins, director at Kids and Cars, a Kansas-based national child safety organization, said children like French make up the majority of victims who routinely are struck by vehicles in driveways and on roads.

"This is something we are concerned about," Rollins said in a telephone interview. "Motorists have to be aware at all times — that's it."

In 70 percent of these incidents, a parent or relative is the driver, the organization said.

According to data provided by the Oklahoma Highway Safety Office, of the state's reported backing deaths, three children were under 5 and four were under 17.

In the U.S., at least 50 children are backed over by vehicles every week. Some 48 are treated in hospital emergency rooms and at least two children are fatally injured, she said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that 2,400 children are treated each year after being struck or rolled over by a moving vehicle.

Rollins maintained that many of the reported accidents are not usually caused by negligence, but by parents momentarily losing contact with a child.

"We call it the 'Bye Bye Syndrome,' " she said about the term used to describe children who rush out of their homes to hug or wave goodbye to a parent as they are exiting a driveway. "Children who are walking age often want to run and get out of the house. If the parent does not notice, they're gone out of front the door."

Oklahoma Highway Patrol spokesman Capt. George Brown said law enforcement officials have considered backing incidents such a priority that troopers have held seminars at area schools to inform children and parents about its dangers.

"The most important thing for people to understand is that they have to see what's behind them," Brown said.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recently released a proposed rear visibility standard that would require all motor vehicles sold or leased in the U.S. to come equipped with backup cameras by 2014.

Brown said motorists can purchase inexpensive rear cameras that fit any make and model vehicle.

Honda is currently the only auto manufacturer that provides nearly all its vehicles with rear visibility cameras.

The feature is especially important after studies indicate about 60 percent of backing collisions involved large trucks, vans and sport-utility vehicles that notoriously have rear blind spots.

"This is something I'm passionate about," Brown said.

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## Safety tips

- Teach children that parked vehicles might move. Let them know that even though they can see the vehicle, the driver might not be able to see them.
- Consider installing cross-view mirrors, audible collision detectors, rear-view video camera and/or some type of back up detection device.
- Measure the size of your blind zone (area) behind the vehicle(s) you drive. A 5-foot-1-inch driver in a pickup truck can have a rear blind zone approximately 8 feet wide by 50 feet long.
- Be aware that steep inclines and large SUVs, vans and trucks add to the difficulty of seeing behind a vehicle.
- Hold your child's hand when leaving the vehicle.
- Teach your children to never play in, around or behind a vehicle, and always set the emergency brake.
- Keep toys and other sports equipment off the driveway.
- Homeowners should trim landscaping around the driveway to ensure they can see the sidewalk, street and pedestrians clearly when backing out of their driveway. Pedestrians also need to be able to see a vehicle pulling out of the driveway.
- Never leave children alone in or around cars; not even for a minute.

Source: [kidsandcars.org](http://kidsandcars.org)

[http://www.tulsaworld.com/news/crimewatch/motorists-backing-up-hurt-hundreds-of-kids-yearly/article\\_56715d69-aa45-544c-8a86-cdc45266db7f.html](http://www.tulsaworld.com/news/crimewatch/motorists-backing-up-hurt-hundreds-of-kids-yearly/article_56715d69-aa45-544c-8a86-cdc45266db7f.html)