

After Years Of Delays, Rear Visibility Requirements Move Closer To Reality

But safety advocates are concerned new regulations won't include a backup camera mandate

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Honda says it will become the first automaker to offer backup cameras as standard equipment across its lineup when the 2015 Honda Fit reaches showrooms. (Honda)

Regulations that would require automakers to improve rear-view visibility on all new cars and light trucks are nearing completion after six years of delays.

The U.S. Department of Transportation sent its proposed rear-visibility rules to the Obama administration for review on Christmas Day. The White House Office of Management and Budget now must finalize the regulations.

The rule is intended to minimize the risk of pedestrian deaths from vehicles in reverse, a type of accident that disproportionately affects children. Already in 2014, two children have died from cars backing over them, driven in each case by the children's father.

Specifics of the Transportation Department's proposal are not available during the review, but the rules are expected to compel automakers to install rear-view cameras as mandatory equipment on all new vehicles.

That's what safety advocates have wanted all along. Though they were pleased the proposed ruling had finally been issued, there was some worry Friday the final rules would omit the rear-view camera mandate.

"We're encouraged, but we're also a little concerned about speculation the rear-view camera may not be in there," said Janette Fennell, the president and founder of [Kids and Cars](#), a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting children in and around vehicles. "I'm wondering where that might be coming from."

On Thursday, *The Automotive News* had reported the possibility the new standards could offer an [alternative to rear-view cameras](#), such as redesigned mirrors, that improved visibility.

The Office of Management and Budget typically completes its reviews of new rules in 90 days, although that can be extended. OMB officials said Friday they do not comment on pending rules.

The intent of the rules is to enhance rear visibility for drivers and prevent pedestrian deaths. Approximately 200 pedestrians are backed over in the United States each year, according to estimates from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Accidents Mostly Affect Children

Roughly half the victims are children younger than age five. A government analysis concluded approximately half the victims — 95 to 112 — could be saved with new regulations.

Yet the rules have arrived at a glacial pace. President George W. Bush signed legislation that had been passed with bipartisan Congressional support in 2008. But automakers have fought the idea of adding rear-view cameras, saying it is too expensive. Despite the law being enacted, [NHTSA has delayed issuing details of the rules five different times](#).

In September, a group of concerned parents, consumer organizations and safety advocates filed a petition with a U.S. Court of Appeals in New York that they hoped would force NHTSA to issue its rules within 90 days.

Though no court order had yet been issued, NHTSA complied with that by sending the rules to the Office of Management and Budget on Christmas Day.

Although the issuance of the rules had been a moment many around the auto industry had anticipated for six years, a

NHTSA spokesperson did not comment on the agency's proposal other than to say an "interagency review continues as NHTSA works toward finalizing a rule on rear visibility standards for motor vehicles."

"To see there's this movement is very encouraging," Fennell said. "It's going to be very interesting to see what they do with the regulations."

In the meantime, children continue to get hurt and killed in backover accidents. Two such deaths have already occurred in 2014. A 32-year-old Louisiana father [accidentally backed a Ford F-250 pickup truck over his four-year-old son](#) on Wednesday. The accident occurred New Year's Day in Buras. Vincent Hyunh was killed. On Thursday afternoon, a two-year-old California girl was killed when she walked behind her father's Ford pickup truck as he was backing out of the driveway, [according to The Times-Standard](#). Ester Tilsner, 2, was killed.

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