

## Keep Your Kids Safe from Power Window Accidents

The technology in some of today's autos dazzles the mind. Nowadays, some cars have features that can warn you if you start drifting into another lane and even help with notoriously tricky parallel parking.



**RISKY DESIGNS** Horizontal rocker switches (above) and toggle switches (below).



**SAFER** Lever switches have to be pulled up to raise a car window.

But there's one technical feature most cars still don't have – [power windows that automatically reverse](#) if a hand, head or other obstruction is placed in their path.

When it comes to protecting your kids from these kinds of accidents, you're on your own. But here are six things you can do to keep your kids out of harm's way.

**Realize the risks.** Power windows have the capacity to exert enough force to fracture or crush bones or even strangle a child. A National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) study estimated that approximately [2,000 emergency room visits](#) each year are caused by power windows. Although most [power window-related injuries](#) result in damage to a child's finger or arm, five children's deaths were caused by power windows in a one-year period, according to the NHTSA.

**Never leave children unattended.** The first rule of safety is: Never leave a child alone in a car, even for just a minute. Not only is this a good habit to get into, it is also against [the law in 18 states](#). Removing the keys and turning off the car does not lesson all of the risks and still presents the potential for danger say the experts at KidsAndCars.org. Prevailing wisdom is better safe than sorry.

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**Check your window switches.** There are three types of switches and two – rocker and toggle switches – pose a greater risk than the third (lever switch), especially when mounted horizontally on a door armrest. Rocker switches move the glass up when you press one end, down when you press the other; and toggle switches go forward or back. Lever switches are safer because they must be pulled up or pushed down, which makes it less likely that a child will accidentally raise the glass.

If you're shopping for a new car, you don't have to worry about this because the NHTSA banned power window rocker and toggle switches from vehicles sold or leased in the U.S. But keep this in mind if you're looking for a used car built before 2010 because the type and location of switches will vary depending on the manufacturer.

**Teach your children.** Even before they hit the terrible twos, children are old enough to understand that not everything is a toy. Teach yours not to play with the windows. They also should learn not to stand, lean, or push against the arm rests where the window switches are usually located.

**Use your car's child-safety or window locks.** Most vehicles have either or both of these mechanisms to stop anyone but the driver from controlling the windows. A Harris poll also found that many window-related injuries were caused by someone other than the injured person.

**Look before you act.** Even locks aren't fail-safe, since injuries can occur when a driver is operating the switch and ignores or cannot see the back seat passengers. Always check to make sure the windows are clear before raising them.

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