

Accurately Defining the Terms “Blind Spot” & “BlindZone”

With the astounding increase in incidents involving children and motor vehicles that are referred to as ‘backovers,’ the need to accurately define the terms used in describing such incidents has become of utmost importance. These tragedies are most often attributed to a lack of visibility or more specifically, the existence of a “blindzone” behind or in front of a vehicle.

The national safety advocacy organization KidsAndCars.org is calling for all agencies to formally adopt the use of the term "blindzone" rather than "blind spot" when describing the areas that cannot be seen by a driver when slowly backing up or moving forward in a vehicle.

Consumers can become confused when the area behind or in front of the vehicle is referred to as a "blind spot" because traditionally that phrase has been associated with the area beside a vehicle that can contribute to crashes when changing lanes.

Currently, there is a great deal of attention being placed on the issue of “blind spots” and the dangers drivers face when changing lanes. Numerous technologies are being introduced to address that issue; thus adding further confusion regarding what area around a vehicle is being referred to as dangerous.

Safety advocate groups prefer the phrase "blindzone" for several reasons:

1. The use of the word “blindzone” differentiates the area behind the vehicle that often contributes to backover incidents (and similarly the area in front of the vehicle that contributes to frontovers) from the area beside a vehicle that lacks visibility when changing lanes.
2. Referring to the area that lacks visibility behind or in front of a vehicle as a "spot" grossly understates the size of the area and magnitude of the danger. On average, most vehicles have a blindzone behind them that measures approximately 7-8 feet wide and 20-30 feet long. An area of that dimension is certainly not a “spot” and is therefore more accurately described as a “zone.”
3. Consumer Reports, a national leader in evaluating vehicle safety, has changed its language to incorporate the term “blindzone” in all future publications.
4. The National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has agreed to incorporate the use of the term “blindzone” when describing the area behind and in front of the vehicle that lacks visibility.

While it is difficult to establish uniform terminology, KidsAndCars.org urges the government, automotive industry, public relations firms, media and other safety advocacy organizations to adopt the use of consistent terminology for the sake of accuracy and to prevent consumer confusion.

KidsAndCars.org is committed to protecting children and calls on all organizations to continue to educate consumers regarding the dangers children face in and around motor vehicles while being mindful of using accurate terms.