

Power windows kill children, groups say

The Associated Press

Washington — Two-year-old Zoie Gates died quickly. When she leaned out of her parents' truck to pet a dog, she hit the power window switch with her knee and the window came up, strangling her. Her father was only a few yards away.

Zoie's mother, Britt Gates of Anthony, Kan., is now urging automakers to install safer window switches and windows that will automatically stop closing if something is in the way. She also is warning parents that windows can pack up to 80 pounds of force.

"It wasn't a fair match, and now my baby is gone," a tearful Gates said.

Gates joined Kids and Cars,

On the Web

Kids and Cars: <http://www.kid-sandcars.org>

Ford Motor Co.:

<http://www.ford.com>

General Motors Corp.:

<http://www.gm.com>

DaimlerChrysler AG:

<http://www.daimlerchrysler.com>

the Consumer Federation of America and others yesterday to launch a campaign aimed at forcing U.S. automakers to change their windows.

"The industry shirks responsibility for windows they know to be deadly," said Janette Fennell, president of Kids and Cars of Kansas City, Kan.

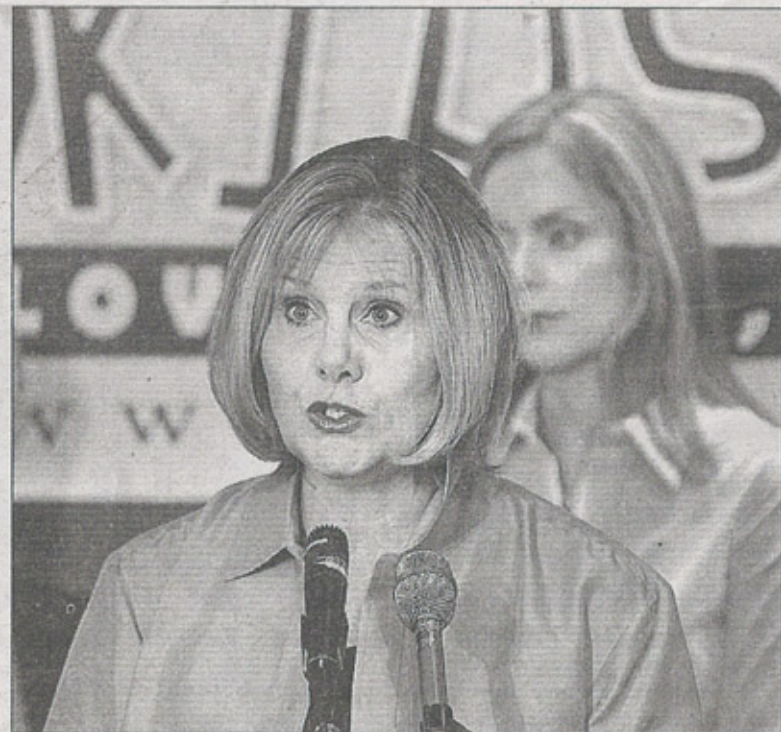
At least 23 deaths from windows

Kids and Cars has documented 23 deaths from power windows since 1993 but says the total could be much higher. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is studying the problem and plans to release preliminary data on deaths this fall, spokesman Rae Tyson said.

Kids and Cars is filing a petition asking NHTSA to require safer power windows.

The campaign doesn't target European or Japanese automakers, which install safer switches.

In April the European Union began requiring automakers to have safer switches. Those switches are flush with the arm rest and require users to pull up if they want the window to go up.



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Janette Fennell, left, president of Kids and Cars, meets reporters at the National Press Club in Washington yesterday at the kickoff of a national campaign aimed at educating consumers about the dangers of power windows and improving power window safety. Standing behind Fennell is Britt Gates of Anthony, Kan., whose 9-month-old daughter Zoie was killed by an automobile power window.