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Gadgets Help Avoid Back-Over Accidents

Devices Limit Danger Of Big Car's Blind Spot



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CHICAGO -- It happens once a week in the United States. Children are killed in what are referred to as "back-over accidents," most in their own driveways.

Families searching for safer cars end up with tragedy and many blame the increasing size of today's popular vehicles.

Target 5's [Lisa Parker](#), in a follow up report to [Driving Blind](#), said that the culprit is often a vehicle's blind spot, but not the one you learned about in driver's education class.

The blind area in Parker's report is directly behind the car in an area that engineers say has grown bigger as cars have increased in size.

"In the world of bigger is better," Parker said in reference to cars in the U.S., "a little-known statistic is growing."

"There (are) many severe injuries. You rarely just walk away from something like this," Janette Fennell (pictured, left), of Kids And Cars, told Target 5.

In one gut-wrenching account after another -- from all across the country -- there are reports of children killed in back-over accidents, each hit by a car going in reverse. Statistics show more than one death every week in this country.



"And no one, again, is saying, 'OK, you used to drive a small vehicle. Now you're driving ... even a small SUV. You need to treat that differently. You need to drive differently,'" Fennell said.

Parker asked, "How blind are we driving these days?"

To answer the question, she got behind the wheel to see first-hand.

Sitting, first, in the drivers seat of a Toyota Camry, she backed it up until a traffic cone -- the size of a toddler -- disappeared from view.

Safety consultants measured the

distance from the bumper to the cone, at that point: 27 feet, 4 inches. That was the size of the blind spot behind the Camry.

Next, Parker drove a Ford Windstar minivan, again reversing to the point where she could no longer see the top of the cone. The size of the blind spot measured about 22 feet.

She then put a Chevy Suburban to the test.

"It's gone," she told the consultants after backing the vehicle up just a short way. "It's in my blind spot."

The blind spot measured 23 feet, 6 inches.

"I think if you told the average driver that there's 25 feet behind their car (in which) they can't see a child ... they'd be very surprised," said Tom Green, of Dynamic Safety.

And they'd probably be unnerved given the unpredictable nature of kids, Parker said.

But there is a growing number of gadgets on the market now to help make larger vehicles more safe: a rear-mounted camera aims to give drivers' eyes in the back of their head; sensors on the bumper blast warnings inside the car;



and a less-expensive optical lens also proves effective. In the Target 5 test just the lens reduced the size of the blind spot by 18 feet.

"They're easy to install," said Green. "You can move them from vehicle to vehicle. Any consumer can go out and buy one and put it in their vehicle today."

Parker said that, in general, engineers say the bigger the car, the bigger the blind spot. But, she added, the Toyota sedan had the biggest blind area in the Target 5 test.

Every driver will be different. Blind spots vary according to how tall you are and how high you raise your seat. But no driver sits tall enough to be immune to the dangers of blind spots and the vulnerability of those who aren't tall at all.

For more information on the sensors, cameras and lenses that help prevention visit KidsAndCars.org.

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