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FACT SHEET

GARAGE DOOR SAFETY

Garage doors pose a risk of serious injury and sometimes even death: over 85 children have died or suffered severe brain injuries involving automatic garage doors since 1974. The most common injury is fingers getting caught or crushed in the joints of the door. Also, injuries related to the failure of extension or torsion springs send approximately 1,000 people to hospital emergency rooms every year. Most injuries and fatalities happen when children find access to garage door opening devices and are trapped under a door that does not reverse.

● The Problem

Underwriters Laboratories (UL) standards, upgraded in 1993, require that automatic garage doors not equipped with a reversing mechanism must have an electric switch that will operate the door only if constant pressure is applied. Doors must also have either a photoelectric sensor (known as an electric eye) or an edge sensor. Unfortunately, most automatic doors currently in use are older designs and do not meet the safety standards recommended. In addition, in cold weather climates homeowners commonly increase the force on their doors to prevent a reversal from built-up ice and snow. Because there is a strong correlation between the amount of force generated and the ability of a door to reverse, doors that are adjusted to produce more force pose an even greater safety risk.

● What You Can Do

Test Your Door Monthly:

Your door should reverse when it comes down on a roll of paper towels. **DO NOT** test by using a firm object such as a block of wood; this does not indicate whether a door would reverse without causing injury to a child in its path. Doors failing the paper towel test should be disconnected until they are professionally serviced. If the door cannot be sufficiently adjusted, replace it with a model that meets current safety standards.

Childproof Your Door:

Install activation buttons at least six feet above the floor or keep the opener in a locked car. Also consider retrofitting your door with keypad switches which discourage use by children.

Keep Your Door Properly Maintained:

Doors should be regularly inspected to ensure that they are correctly balanced, lubricated, and in proper working condition. The adjustment should be set to take the least amount of force necessary to trip the reversal mechanism. If, after adjustment, a door does not reverse when it comes into contact with a roll of paper towels, replace it with a model that meets current safety standards.

Set a Good Example for Children:

Make it a rule in your family to never walk beneath a closing door. Also, after activating an opener, remember not to drive or walk away until the door is completely closed.

Acknowledgments:

Hennepin County Medical Center

Gillette Children's Hospital

Consumer Product Safety Commission

Contact the South Dakota Safety Council at
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