

NEWS from CPSC

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

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To Save Lives Homeowners Should Replace Non-Reversing Garage Doors

WASHINGTON, DC -- Government safety experts are asking homeowners to help save children's lives by checking their garage door openers and, if the doors fail to reverse automatically on striking an object, to have the garage door opener repaired or replaced immediately.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is issuing this advisory as part of its mission to protect the public from unreasonable risks of injury and death associated with consumer products. The CPSC is the Federal agency responsible for product safety. Some 15,000 products fall within the Commission's jurisdiction and each year these products are involved in an estimated 30 million injuries and 22,000 deaths.

According to the CPSC, at least 45 children between the ages of 2 and 14 died between March, 1982 and June, 1990 when they were trapped under closing garage doors. In these cases, garage doors did not reverse automatically when they struck the children.

CPSC said units manufactured before 1982 do not have the safety features incorporated into the voluntary standard (ANSI-UL 325-1982). Some old openers are equipped with a device that only stops the closing door and does not reverse when it strikes an object. Other pre-1982 openers include a device intended to cause the closing door to reverse when it strikes an object, but for reasons mostly related to age, installation and maintenance, these may not be safe enough to prevent child deaths. The devices cannot be adjusted or repaired to provide the safety available in garage door openers manufactured in 1982 or later.

Homeowners who are uncertain about the safety of their garage door opener can check the unit by placing a two-inch wooden block in the path of the door. If the door does not promptly reverse on striking the block, the unit should be disengaged and a service technician called to see if repairs are needed. If the opener does not have the reversing feature, the old garage door should be disconnected and replaced with one meeting the ANSI-UL voluntary standard.

Additional safeguards are now available to protect children from danger, CPSC added. On many post-1982 units, service technicians can install an "electric eye" near floor level to reverse a closing garage door automatically whenever an object crosses the path of the door.

In addition to relocating wall switches away from the reach of young children, CPSC also urged homeowners to keep remote controllers in the glove compartment of the car. Garage doors should be checked periodically to make sure that track rollers and other hardware are functioning properly.

The Commission staff met with manufacturers urging them to intensify their efforts at informing owners of garage door operators of the hazards, the need to test the mechanism periodically, and the need to replace garage door operators manufactured before 1982. The Commission staff is in the process of reviewing the industry's response. Further action may be recommended after the CPSC staff completes its review of the response from industry.

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