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Every year, thousands of children are hurt or die because a driver backing up didn't see them. These incidents for the most part take place in residential driveways or parking lots.

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2/18/05 study reports over 2400 children are treated in hospital emergency rooms every year due a child being struck by or rolled over by a vehicle moving in reverse. (48 per week)
- The predominant age of victims were one year olds. (12-23 months)
- Over 60% of backing up incidents involved a larger size vehicle. (truck, van, SUV)
- Tragically, in over 70% of these incidents, a parent or close relative is behind the wheel.

KIDS AND CARS urges all adults to heighten their awareness before they engage a vehicle into reverse; especially when children are present. Young children are impulsive and unpredictable; still have very poor judgment, and little understanding of danger. In addition, young children do not recognize boundaries such as property lines, sidewalks, driveways or parking spaces. Toddlers have established independent mobility between the ages of 12-23 months, but the concept of personal safety is absent. Backovers are often the predictable consequence of a child following a parent into the driveway without their knowledge. Backovers can happen in any vehicle because all vehicles have a blind zone; the area behind a vehicle you can't see from the driver's seat. The danger tends to increase with larger vehicles.

It's always best to look carefully behind the vehicle before you get in and again before you put the car in gear to back up. Remember to back up slowly, and pay attention to your mirrors.

KIDS AND CARS recommendations to keep children safe include:

- Walk around and behind a vehicle prior to moving it.
- Know where your kids are. Make children move away from your vehicle to a place where they are in full view before moving the car and know that another adult is properly supervising children before moving your vehicle.
- Teach children that "parked" vehicles might move. Let them know that they can see the vehicle; but the driver might not be able to see them.
- Consider installing cross view mirrors, audible collision detectors, rear view video camera and/or some type of back up detection device.
- Measure the size of your blind zone (area) behind the vehicle(s) you drive. A 5-foot-1-inch driver in a pickup truck can have a rear blind zone of approximately 8 feet wide by 50 feet long.
- Be aware that steep inclines and large SUV's, vans and trucks add to the difficulty of seeing behind a vehicle.
- Hold children's hand when leaving the vehicle.
- Teach your children to never play in, around or behind a vehicle and always set the emergency brake.
- Keep toys and other sports equipment off the driveway.
- Homeowners should trim landscaping around the driveway to ensure they can see the sidewalk, street and pedestrians clearly when backing out of their driveway. Pedestrians also need to be able to see a vehicle pulling out of the driveway.
- Never leave children alone in or around cars; not even for a minute.
- Keep vehicles locked at all times; even in the garage or driveway and always set your parking brake.
- Keys and/or remote openers should never be left within reach of children.
- Make sure all child passengers have left the car after it is parked.
- Be especially careful about keeping children safe in and around cars during busy times, schedule changes and periods of crisis or holidays.

These precautions can save lives.

For additional information, visit the KIDS AND CARS website at www.KidsAndCars.org

