

Consumer Product Safety Commission

Non Reversing Garage Door Openers A Hazard

Homeowners with automatic garage door openers that do not automatically reverse should repair or replace them with new openers which do reverse to prevent young children from being trapped and killed under closing garage doors.

According to reports received by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), approximately 60 children between the ages of 2 and 14 have been trapped and killed under automatic garage doors since March 1982. This is approximately 4 such deaths per year. Other children have suffered brain damage or serious injuries when the closing door contacted them, and failed to stop and reverse its direction.

CPSC urges consumers to check the condition and operation of their garage door and the opener. A properly operating garage door will be "balanced." This means that the door will stay in place when stopped in any partially opened position. A severely unbalanced garage door could unexpectedly crash to the floor possibly striking someone under the open door.

To check the garage door, the garage door opener must be detached from the door while in the closed position. On most openers manufactured since 1982, a "quick-release" mechanism is provided which permits the opener to be detached from the door.

To avoid amputation or crushing injuries, homeowners should be careful when manually operating the door not to place hands or fingers between door sections or near pulleys, hinges, or springs. The door should not stick or bind when opened or closed. If doors are not "balanced," or if they bind or stick, they should be serviced by a professional.

Once the garage door is operating properly, homeowners should check to see that the garage door opener's force and limit settings are adjusted according to manufacturer's instructions. Check the garage door operator owners manual for any instructions on testing the safety features. One quick test is to place a 2x4 on the floor of the garage in the door's path. If the door does not properly reverse on striking the 2x4 then the garage door opener should be disengaged until the unit is either adjusted according to the instructions in the owners manual, repaired, or replaced with a new garage door opener. A professional garage door service should be contacted if the homeowner is not comfortable with performing these tests, repairs and adjustments.

All homeowners should disconnect all garage door openers that have not been certified as meeting the requirements of the voluntary ANSI/UL standard 325-1982. The standard calls for a number of safety features not found on earlier openers, and also subjects new openers to more stringent safety tests.



CPSC cautions consumers that not all devices that open and close the garage door are necessarily safe. Some old openers are equipped with a mechanism that only stops the closing door when it strikes an object, not reversing the door in the process. Other pre-1982 openers have a device intended to reverse the closing door when it strikes an object, but for reasons related to age, installation and maintenance, these products may not be safe enough to pre-vent entrapment of a child. These openers cannot be adjusted or repaired to provide the automatic reversing feature found on later devices.

The CPSC requires that all garage door operators manufactured or imported after January 1, 1993, for sale in the United States be outfitted with an external entrapment protection system. This system can be an electric eye, a door edge sensor, or any other device that provides equivalent protection. If an electric eye is used, it should be installed at a height of 4 to 6 inches above the floor.

Consumers should inspect garage doors and operation of the door opener every 30 days to verify that the system is functioning properly. Hardware and fittings should be checked to keep the door on track at all times. Should a hazard exist, homeowners should disconnect the automatic opener from the door as specified in the owner's manual, and manually open and close the garage door until needed repair/ replacement is completed.

Lastly, homeowners should relocate the wall switch in the garage as high as practical above the floor in an effort to restrict children's use of the automatic garage door. Remote control door operating devices should be kept locked in the car and away from children. Parents should also tell their children about the potential hazard.