

Garage Door Safety

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.

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 injured or killed under closing garage doors.

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 for balance, the garage door opener must be detached from the door while in the closed position. Most openers manufactured since 1982, have a "quick-release" mechanism provided which permits the opener to be detached from the door. The door should not stick or bind when opened or closed.

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 owner's manual for any instructions on testing the safety features.

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. These openers cannot be adjusted or repaired to provide the automatic reversing feature found on later devices. 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 or maintenance, these products may not be safe enough to prevent entrapment of a child. The CPSC requires that all garage door openers manufactured or imported after January 1, 1993 for sale in the United States be outfitted with an external entrapment protection system.

TEST:

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 owner's manual, repaired, or replaced with a new garage door opener.



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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.