

fact sheet

Tragically one child, often a toddler, is run over in the driveway of their own home every week in Australia. In Queensland, four children under five die each year as a result of a low-speed run-over and 81 children present at hospital emergency departments with injuries, usually serious, with 60% requiring admission.

A slow moving vehicle reversing down a driveway can trap a child, causing fatal crush injuries. Children who survive are often left with severe long-term injuries.

Driveway accidents mainly involve toddlers, who are old enough to be mobile but are too small to be easily visible from the driving position when close to the vehicle.

The Facts*

- Low speed run-over is the third most common cause of death by injury in the toddler age group in Queensland (1-4 years).
- Children aged one to two years are the most likely to be killed or injured in **home** driveways.
- The vehicle is usually only moving slowly and is often being driven by a parent, relative or friend.
- 60% of vehicles were reversing at the time.
- 41% of vehicles were 4WDs. As 4WDs make up only 6% of passenger vehicles in Queensland, there is an increased risk with this type of vehicle. Other large vehicles such as utes, vans and trucks are also involved more often than sedan type cars
- The highest proportion of driveway fatal accidents occur on weekdays in the early morning between 8:00am and 10:00am and in the late afternoon between 4:00pm and 6:00pm.

We don't think of children as being in danger in such a familiar environment, but they are.

Why the risk?

Young children are naturally inquisitive and want to see what is going on. They move surprisingly fast and can run on to the street without warning.

In the time it takes for the driver to say goodbye and start the car, a child can move from a 'safe' position onto the driveway and into the path of the vehicle.

Most drivers are aware of their car's 'blind spots' however the rear vision of a number of popular cars

has been tested and results show that there is in fact a large 'blind space' behind most cars, particularly when reversing.

Even if your car has parking sensors or a video camera fitted, you may not notice a small child until it is too late to stop. Parking sensors will activate anyway when you are in a situation such as parallel parking and may be ignored.

Most accidents occur in fine weather and bright conditions. Children are more vulnerable on local streets and driveways.



Case Study

One-year-old Estelle was helping her mum wind up the hose in the backyard of her home, when her dad accidentally reversed his car over her. Her mum had realised that the garden hose was caught and she momentarily took her eyes off Estelle.

When she turned back, Estelle was lying under the car. Her head was free of the car wheels, but she could see that she'd obviously been run over. She was having a lot of difficulty breathing. She was very blue.

Incredibly, Estelle escaped serious injury, but her parents remain haunted by their close call. They find it hard to believe that the car ran right over her and she's still with them today.

Driveway accidents commonly occur by:

- Young children being left unsupervised in a seemingly secure location indoor, managing to get outdoors and into the path of a vehicle with the driver being unaware of the child's presence.
- Drivers making a risky decision or a driver making an error.
- Young children playing outside and suddenly moving into the path of a moving vehicle, unknown to the driver.



This tall (for his age) two year old is invisible behind a family sedan.

Queensland Cases

1. 1 year old girl, injury to legs and hips when backed over by a car in her driveway
2. 1 year old boy backed over by a truck in a public car park, multiple injuries to chest and abdomen, triaged as resuscitate
3. 2 year old girl presenting with head injuries after her 'mother got out to open gates, didn't realize child had moved and she reversed over her' triaged as urgent

Safety Steps

- Always supervise your children and do not leave them alone to play especially when they are near parked or moving vehicles. Hold their hands or hold them close to keep them safe.
- If you are the only adult at home and need to move a vehicle, even only a small distance, place your child securely in the vehicle with you while you move it.
- Make access to the driveway from the house difficult for young children, possibly by using security doors, fencing or gates.
- Drivers should walk around their vehicle before leaving an area where children may have been.
- Don't let your children use the driveway as a play area; create safe play areas for your children.
- Do not leave children under the supervision of other older children. Primary aged children can have trouble determining distance, speed and consequences.

Children learn mostly by observation and imitation. Examples set by parents can have effects on their behaviour.



For further information visit the NRMA website on <http://www.nrma.com.au/pub/nrma/home/homehelp/safety/driveway.shtml>. This site also includes results of a reversing visibility survey on common cars.

*Data provided by QISU 2006 and QISU Injury Bulletin No. 76 (www.qisu.org.au)

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