



Get the Facts: Safe Backing Up

In a Nutshell

It seems like the simplest and possibly safest part of driving – backing up just a few feet at a low rate of speed. But incidents while backing up account for a quarter of all crashes and can result in deaths and damage.

What should I know about backing up safety?

Backing up may seem easy and straightforward, but it's not an easy maneuver and can be further complicated by:

- The driver's seat faces forward
- Larger, longer and taller vehicles with bigger blind spots
- Mirrors that may distort images
- Driver distractions
- Low visibility conditions
- Physical barriers that make it difficult to see

The key to crash prevention is processes and close attention to your surroundings for what you can see and may not be able to see.

Best practices for backing up

- Get to know the vehicle's blind spots. Mirrors never give you the whole picture.
- If your vehicle has a backup camera, use it, but don't rely only on it.
- Think in advance. Avoid unnecessary backing situations.
- Park defensively. Choose easy-exit parking spaces.
- Take extra precautions when parking in alleys. If you cannot pull all the way through or turn around, back in so you can enter the street going forward.
- Do a walk-around to get a firsthand view of the backing area.
- Know the clearances and check for obstructions.
- Every backing situation is new and different. Guard against becoming complacent.
- Use a spotter. Whenever possible, use a second person to help guide the driver using hand signals.
- If you're doing a walk-around scan on your own, return to your vehicle as soon as possible as conditions can change.
- Always back slowly while continuously looking and listening for signs of trouble.

A startling one out of every four crashes involves backing – especially since the average driver operates in reverse less than a mile every year.

Of the half million backing up accidents annually, 15,000 included some sort of injury.

Approximately 210 people are killed annually from backing crashes, mostly children under the age of five.





- Continuously check all mirrors and your backup camera while backing.

Always watch out for kids!

Did you know as many as 62 children can fit in the blind spot of a large SUV, and in some models, anyone under 5' tall is completely invisible to the driver using just their mirrors? Even when reversing at a glacial speed, impact with a child can result in tragedy, with the majority of backing up incidents occurring in driveways and parking lots. Scan, watch and scan again.

Sources: National Safety Council
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

