

Clippings are brief summaries of recent news articles in the consumer media. They offer insights to the latest trends for the door business.

From the Editor:

The stories below reveal some details about some tragic garage door accidents that recently made the news. By studying stories like these, we believe that we can all improve the level of safety offered by our industry. Ignorance gets us nowhere.

Family Sues After Child Is Killed in Garage Door Accident

Source: Lauren R. Harrison, "Wrongful death lawsuit: Parents of boy killed by garage door sue homeowner, manufacturer and installer," *Chicago Tribune*, May 14, 2009. (Also in *Chicago Sun-Times*, May 10, 2009, and *WLS-TV*, May 13, 2009)

According to reports, this tragic accident occurred on Saturday evening, May 9, when a 6-year-old boy was "crushed" under a residential garage door. The medical examiner's office said the death was due to compressional asphyxia.

Reports vary on the nature of the door's descent. One report cited police saying it "fell on top of the boy's back," while another report says the door "closed" on him, causing the boy to be "trapped."

On May 13, less than four days after the accident, the parents held a press conference to announce they had filed a wrongful-death lawsuit against the Chicago homeowner (the boy's uncle), Sears, Roebuck & Co. (alleged to be the manufacturer), and Mid-America Door of Oklahoma (alleged to be the installer).

The suit alleged that the garage door didn't have "a motion sensor" and that the boy's uncle failed to warn his relatives that the door "could unexpectedly close or fall."

Editor's Note: All accidents like this are tragic. This story illustrates how quickly garage door dealers can be named in a lawsuit. We don't know what went wrong in this accident, but installing dealers can share this story with their technicians as motivation to double their efforts for safe installations.

Toddler Struck in Head by Garage Door

Source: "Boy dies after being struck by garage door," *Los Angeles Times*, March 11, 2009. (Also on *KTLA-TV*, March 11, 2009, and *KABC-TV*, March 12, 2009)

In this accident, a 3-year-old boy in Palmdale, Calif., was killed by "a garage door that malfunctioned" at his family's home.

News reports indicate that the boy's mother opened the automatic garage door while preparing to leave with her two sons. When she attempted to close the garage door, "something

malfunctioned, and the door hit the 3-year-old in the head," according to police.

Homicide detectives determined that the death was a result of an accident. A video camera crew reported that the door suddenly slammed shut when detectives inspected the door.

Editor's Note: As with most of these accident reports, this story does not include enough details to determine the exact "malfunction" that occurred. Was it a broken spring? Would an anti-drop device have helped? No one can be sure until the facts are known. But you can bet this is another instance in which installation and maintenance will be reviewed closely.

Boy Takes Scary Ride on Garage Door

Source: "Garage door gives boy, 9, a scary ride," *KATU-TV*, Portland Ore., March 31 and April 2, 2009.

Unlike the first two clippings, this accident resulted in no serious injuries and did not involve a descending door. In this case, a 9-year-old boy from Beaverton, Ore., said his shirt had "gotten caught" on a handle on the outside of a motorized ascending garage door.

Reports say the door kept rising and "tried to pull him through" the top of the opening

and "tried to pull him through" the top of the opening, "cinching (his) shirt ever more tightly around his waist." Eventually, a neighbor came to the rescue and used scissors to cut through his shirt and free him.

The boy admitted that his shirt had been caught on the handle before. The boy's mother reportedly asked the garage door opener manufacturer "why

there was no safety sensor for the door when it is going up."

A few days later, a garage door installer discovered that "a dial on the motor was set ... to lift too much weight."

Editor's Note: The news video shows that the door has a horizontal handle on the bottom section, a waist-high lock handle, and a wireless keypad, all mounted on the left side. Point: I don't think the boy "got caught" in the handle; it sounds more like an intentional but dangerous joy ride.

Regardless of how it happened, the story demonstrates a benefit of new opener technology as well as the importance of proper installation and adjustment of the upward force setting.