

ELAA Road Safety Education

Car park and driveway safety



ELAA through our partnership with the Department of Transport delivering the **Starting Out Safely** program has developed a resource that will support educators and families to ensure safe practice around car parks and driveways.

Children cannot always be seen

Because of their size, children are difficult for drivers to see and they are often unaware of the dangers of moving vehicles. Therefore, car parks and driveways can be a hazardous place for children.

On average, seven children are killed each year and 60 seriously injured after being hit or run over by a motor vehicle at home¹. Very young children are at greatest risk. 90% of children killed and 70% of those seriously injured are under five years of age.

The vehicle is generally moving slowly when these run overs occur. And it is generally a family member or friend driving at the time of the run over.

Supervision is the key

Always supervise any children whenever a vehicle is to be moved - hold their hand or hold them close to keep them safe.

It is safest if you are alone to have your child securely seated in their child car seat if you must move your car.

Limit access to the driveway – have the driveway separated, consider installing security doors, fencing or gates.

Educate children to play in safer areas away from driveways and cars. It should never be used as a play area.

Car mirrors and reversing sensors and camera

Although you may have left your child in an area you perceive to be safe, the time it takes to get into the car is time enough for the child to move into the path of the vehicle.

Small children if behind the car are not generally able to be seen through the rear-view mirror.

The rear vision of many cars has been tested and results show that there is not a 'blind spot' but rather a large 'blind space' behind most cars.

Even if your car has rear video and parking sensors, you may not notice a small child until it is too late to stop. Children are run over by vehicles moving forward as well as reversing.

Be aware of your vehicle's blind spaces and ensure you are aware of the correct way to use the mirrors and any other reversing supports in your vehicle.

Do not rely solely on your mirrors it is important to do a check around your car prior to getting into your car every time.

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Early Childhood services drop off and pick up and car parks

Educators are aware of the requirement that “every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury (Nat Law Sec 167, 2012, NQS, 2.3.2, 2018). Furthermore, educators are responsible for children while they are in care from the time that children are signed into the service or the Family Day Care (FDC) premises until the time they are signed out.

However, what about the time before the child is signed in and after the child is signed out?

The times when children are delivered to and collected from services or FDC premises can be challenging for all staff members, particularly where there could be many children coming and going at the same time.

On some occasions, parents may be talking to each other or they are on their mobile phone and not supervising the children. Children have been observed running to cars whilst parents are distracted. It is particularly important to always maintain physical contact with children in driveways and car parks.

Educators have a duty of care to monitor the arrival and departure of children and ensure their safety while they are on the premises. This includes the car park, driveway, and surrounds.

Including driveway and car park safety discussions and activities with children in the curriculum is an important way to educate children on the hazards of these areas.

It is especially important that educators and parents work together to ensure the safety of children.

What should parents do to keep their children safe?

Always make sure that all the entry doors and gates are securely closed every time they use them.

- Open the doors or gates themselves and to discourage children from opening them.
- Never let anyone else’s child out of the doors or gates.
- Park legally. Double parking or blocking other cars is hazardous to other drivers and adult and child pedestrians.
- Be aware of the dangers of reversing vehicles. Hold your child’s hand or hold them close. If you are moving a vehicle, ensure that all children are buckled up safely in the vehicle with you or they are actively supervised by an adult who is holding their hand.
- Talk with other families and children in the area inside the door or gate rather than in the car park or near the road.

References

DET (2016) Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework. Department of Education and Training. Melbourne.

1. Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE), 2012, *Child pedestrian safety: ‘driveway deaths’ and ‘low speed vehicle run-overs’, Australia, 2001-10*, Information Sheet 43, BITRE Canberra

Links:

www.childroadsafety.org.au

www.carseatssavelives.com.au

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