

UL 325: IS IT WORKING?

GDO Safety: Where We've Been and Where We're Going

By Barbara Kelkhoff and Christy Domanski of Chamberlain

It has been over 20 years since industry members worked closely with Underwriters Laboratories and the U.S. government to legislatively address garage door opener safety. UL 325 was originally published in 1973, and it still stands today as the cornerstone of evolving safety standards for residential door openers.

How did we get to this point? Let's review.

March 1982 - October 1992	During this period, there are 54 deaths and 37 serious injuries to children under age 15 resulting from their being trapped when an automatic garage door failed to stop and reverse its direction, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). That's about eight such injuries or deaths per year. ¹
Oct. 5, 1988	On this day, two separate accidents involving automated garage doors claim the lives of two children in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.
1989 - 1990	Minnesota lawyer Shawn Bartsch conducts a campaign to address these injuries, proposing state legislation for residential garage door openers. She discusses the proposal with Colin Willmott of Chamberlain, who then engages members of the Door Operator and Remote Controls Manufacturers Association (DORCMA).
1989 - 1991	DORCMA works with Underwriters Laboratories, the Canadian Standards Association, the CPSC, the National Safety Council, and state legislators to review and address these accidents. The groundwork is laid for the technology and the regulations for "monitored safety devices" as we know them today.
Nov. 16, 1990	President George H.W. Bush signs federal legislation (Public Law 101-608, the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 1990) that requires all residential garage door openers produced after Jan. 1, 1993, to meet new entrapment-protection requirements in the upcoming third edition of UL 325.
1990 - 1993	California, Minnesota, and New York pass state legislation requiring external entrapment-protection sensors on all openers sold in these states after January 1, 1993. In addition, these three states and Indiana pass legislation requiring garage door technicians to test the contact reversing mechanism of older openers being serviced.
Dec. 31, 1991	The third edition of UL 325, the Standard for Door, Drapery, Gate, Louver and Window Operators and Systems, is published with the new regulations that approve photoelectric eyes and edge sensors as acceptable external entrapment-protection devices.
1992	The CPSC enacts regulations covering residential garage door openers, including new provisions from UL 325 requiring that all residential garage door openers manufactured or imported for sale in the United States be equipped with monitored entrapment-protection devices, such as a photo-eye system.
Jan. 1, 1993	The mandatory effective date for monitored entrapment protection in the United States.
Jan. 1, 1994	The mandatory effective date for monitored entrapment protection in Canada.

Was all this effort successful?

Definitely. Since Jan. 1, 1993, the total number of incidents of child-entrapment deaths or serious injuries has been reduced to nearly zero for automated garage doors properly installed with external photo-eye entrapment protection. This is an accomplishment of which the industry can be proud.

Did we stop there?

No. Thanks to advancements in technology, new openers have even more safety features and improved entrapment protection.

- In 2006, updates were published in UL 325 adding provisions for "stopped, partially open doors."
- In 2009, UL 325 was updated after DASMA members worked

¹ See the Oct. 7, 2003, CPSC document at <http://www.cpsc.gov/PageFiles/117849/gdoupdate.pdf>.

closely with UL to develop provisions covering emerging technology for unattended operation, such as timers-to-close, Internet connectivity, and other smart control stations.

- In 2011, UL 325 added provisions for the evaluation and testing of entrapment protection based on wireless technology.
- Other convenience features such as battery backup and remote controls continue to be developed. New technologies present new considerations for UL 325.

What can you do? Every one of us is an ambassador for the message about garage door and opener safety.

Help spread the safety message.

Encourage family, friends, and neighbors to regularly check and test their garage door openers. In three easy steps, one can quickly determine whether a garage door opener is functioning safely and properly. To perform the safety check, follow these three steps.

1. Check the sides of the garage door for properly installed photo-eyes mounted no higher than six inches off the floor.
2. Block the photo-eye with an object over six inches tall and press the garage door opener's close button. The door should not close.
3. Lay a 2x4 flat on the ground (or any similar, rigid 1-1/2"-high object) in the door's path and press the close button. The door should reverse off this object.

If you notice a garage door opener manufactured before 1993, spread the message about advancements in features and safety devices. Encourage friends to replace their older openers.

Use your DASMA resources. You can find several resources available free on the dasma.com website. Examples include:

- DASMA's campaign to encourage homeowners to "replace, not repair"
- TDS 167: Sectional Garage Door and Electric Operator Checklist for Home Inspectors and Consumers
- TDS 351: Federal and State Garage Door Operator Legislation Guidelines for Dealers and Installers
- TDS 369: FAQs Regarding Automated Residential Garage Door Systems

Our industry's excellence and commitment to safety starts with you. With your help in replacing older openers manufactured before 1993, we can continue to keep garages safe for homeowners for years to come. ■

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