

Vehicle turntable offers driveway safety

by Mark_Maynard

A recent report on back-over accidents, which kill at least 100 children in the United States every year, prompted a call from Bill Schwenker.

The San Diego entrepreneur manufactures the CarTurner driveway turntable. The 15-foot disc creates more space in cramped driveways by allowing vehicles to be pivoted into position so they can be driven front first into the flow of traffic. But it is also a safety device that can help avoid back-overs, Schwenker says.

HIGH-TECH DRIVEWAY - The CarTurner driveway turntable requires no concrete work, can be installed in two hours and plugs into a 110-volt electrical outlet. Prices range from \$8,400 to \$9,800 and include a three-year warranty. CNS Photo courtesy of CarTurner. "Backing out of a drive is not how a car was intended to be driven," he says. "Looking through and around headrests, rear-quarter blind spots and using rearview mirrors creates a real safety factor," says Schwenker, 61, who has degrees in economics and finance.

The most common nontraffic-related fatality type involving children 15 and younger from 2002 to 2006 was back-over accidents, according to a report by Kids and Cars, a nonprofit organization committed to pursuing safety for children in and around motor vehicles. At least 50 children are backed over every week nationwide, and on average two of them die.

Schwenker's turntable looks like a flying saucer and is just 3 inches high with a beveled lip for smooth entry and exit. It is all above ground and can be installed - in the worst case - in two hours, he says.

"When you pull onto it, you can feel when the vehicle is in position," he says. It takes about six uses for the procedure to become familiar.

It's also handy in the rain when unloading groceries because the vehicle can be rotated so you don't have to walk all the way around the car, he says.

The self-contained turntable uses three rings connected by spokes. The wheels - 70 sets, each with its own suspension - ride on the rings, and the rotation is powered by four or six DC motors (depending on ramp diameter) that fit inside the ramp. It is virtually impossible to be shocked on the turntable, he says.

The laser-cut stainless-steel surface panels are heavy, 16- to 18-gauge, and the 13-foot-4-inch turning surface (with a 15-foot-4-inch total footprint) will support standard-wheelbase cars and sport utility vehicles, such as the Cadillac Escalade and Lincoln Navigator. The standard turntable can be powered with two motors, but Schwenker uses four motors and up to six for larger vehicles.

Installation requires no concrete work, and the turntable can be installed on asphalt, concrete, tile or even carpet - for show-car display. It plugs into a household 110-volt electrical outlet and activates at the push of a button, similar to a garage opener, and the speed is adjustable.

For safety, Schwenker prefers installation to be on a flat surface, but it will work on slight inclines with a pre-inspection.

"It's overbuilt, but we'd rather overbuild it than worry about it," he says.

He spent a year getting the wheels right. "We tested 24 hours a day with a 7,800-pound car on the turntable to find a wheel that would not break or wear down from heat."

Prices are \$8,400 for the nonskid stainless steel model or \$9,800 for a mirror finish. Delivery and installation

are included in the price, and the turntable is guaranteed for three years. All assembly is done at the facility in San Diego, with some parts sourced in San Diego and a few that are from outside the United States.

"At some point, we feel the CarTurner will be a standard feature in a new home," Schwenker says, "just like a garage door opener."

More details at www.carturner.com.

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