

Garage Door Safety:

How Home Inspectors can Have an Impact

BY SALLY CHAPRALIS



MORE THAN 70 PERCENT OF HOME-owners with attached garages use the garage as the main access point to their houses. Because garages are such a major hub of activity in the modern home, garage safety should be an important focus for both homeowners and home inspectors alike.

June is both National Safety Month and National Garage Door Safety Month, so there's no better time for inspectors to commit to checking garage door safety and to educating homeowners about how to inspect their garages to ensure proper operation throughout the year. Although June's special safety focus is on homes and garage doors, June is also a good time to remember that all door systems, including commercial doors and gates, need regular attention.

"Many of us don't check for garage door safety as often as we should. In fact, one in 15 garage doors lack the latest safety features," explains Todd Wilkinson, Field Manager and Safety Ambassador at LiftMaster, the leading domestic manufacturer of garage door openers.

If a garage door opener was made before 1993, it may not be equipped with infrared sensors that will trigger standard safety features. LiftMaster estimates that number at four million garage doors.

The company, which has been manufacturing garage door openers for over 45 years, has a strong commitment to safety and has established an initiative to develop safety ambassadors as a means to further drive public awareness of garage door safety. This initiative is in addition to prior safety efforts from the company, including the following:

• **Don't Chance It. Check It.** This national initiative began in 2013 and helps homeowners understand how to make sure they have the safest possible garage door opener system in place. It also provides resources that home inspectors can use when advocating for safety with homeowners, including the 3-Step Safety Check.

• **3-Step Safety Check.** This offers a quick and easy way to confirm that a garage door is operating properly. Home inspectors can perform the check during inspections, and they should encourage homeowners to execute the test three or four times a year.

To perform the Safety Check:

1. Check the sides of the garage door for properly installed photo eyes (black sensors) mounted no higher than six inches off the floor.
2. Block the photo eye with an object over 6 inches tall and press the garage door opener's close button. The door should not close.
3. Lay an object that is at least 1½ inches high on the ground in the door's path and press the garage door's close button. The door should reverse off this object.

If the home inspector determines a garage door fails any of these steps, a professional garage door dealer should be contacted to help correct the issue.

• **Red Tag Program.** As part of its work with home inspectors, LiftMaster distributes Red Tag Kits, a free resource that provides information on how to identify outdated garage door openers. Each kit includes a Red Tag that inspectors can place on a garage door to alert the homeowner that it is unsafe. Every Red Tag comes with a LiftMaster rebate that homeowners can use toward purchasing a new garage door opener. To date, LiftMaster has distributed more than 400 Red Tag Kits to home inspectors.

Through these resources, LiftMaster is working to help home inspectors and homeowners identify potential problems and ensure the safety of garage door openers across the country. **To learn more or sign up for the free Red Tag Program, visit www.LiftMaster.com/HomeInspectors.** ■

