



Roy's BLOG

Garage Door Safety Checklist

by Roy Bardowell, CDDC

No garage door lasts forever and eventually there will come the day when your garage door cries out for help. Sometimes it will only be a small inexpensive adjustment and other times on older doors it could be a much more expensive rebuild.

Whatever repairs are required, you will very likely require a professionally trained garage door service-person. Sometimes homeowners prefer to do their own repairs, but with garage doors there are many components that are under extreme tension and can easily injure anyone who is not familiar with hidden dangers. If in doubt, do yourself a big favor and call a professional. This person will have the specialized tools and knowledge to perform all the repairs properly.

Unknown to most, your garage door is the biggest moving component in your home and should not be messed with unless you have garage door experience. Even the best engineers have called me for advice. I usually *WOULD NOT RECOMMEND DIY* and will highly refer a local expert. Using a garage door expert is prudent and could save you from severe injury. However, it does not stop there. A good service-person will also perform a 10-25 point safety inspection to ensure your repaired garage door is now safe for yourself and family to use.

Like I mentioned a few times, garage door repairs are NOT a DIY project, but I have listed some of the inspection points a garage door expert will normally check:

► All **RED HEAD BOLTS** should be checked for tightness. Red indicates danger and high tension, so you must be extremely cautious with any *Red Painted Bolts*.



If you accidentally loosen a red painted bolt, you could potentially catapult something into motion and you or someone else could be hit by a Projectile — **SO BEWARE!**

► **BALANCE:** You should test your door for perfect balance. First, open the door to the midway point and let go. *Making sure your feet are NOT under the door.* The door should stay IN PLACE without dropping, or trying to open more. If the door doesn't move from the midway point, it is fair to say, "Your door is moderately, well-balanced".

► **ROLLERS:** Rollers are the wheels that guide your door through the steel tracks. A 'new build' is where you will find poor quality rollers. Unfortunately, the builder in an effort to squeeze the garage door installers for a lower price, will encourage the installer to use the cheapest rollers. Typically ones that don't have ball bearings. If your garage door is noisy, installing new, high-quality nylon rollers are the efficient answer to many more years of safe roller performance.

Another reason to have good ball bearing rollers is they will hold the door in proper position when the door is open. Weaker rollers have been known to snap when the door is completely opened, which can result in the door falling to the floor unexpectedly. Spend a little more money to upgrade your rollers to stronger ones with ball bearings, and you will sleep easy! ***Weak rollers are a safety issue which must be addressed.***

► **CABLES:** Every garage door has a pair of steel cables. These cables are under extreme tension and should be checked for the correct tension, as well as checked for any fraying. If a cable is frayed it will snap in only a short time, which will disable your door. *As a safety check, do a visual inspection of the cables for fraying.*

► **SPRINGS:** *Unknown to most homeowners* are the springs which permit the door to be raised up manually. If any of the springs gives out, it will be difficult to lift a door manually. This is not the time to go out and purchase an electric operator. I have heard people say, "now that I have a motor, can we remove the springs?" *This is erred thinking.* If you cannot open a garage door easily using only one arm, then the motor operator will not lift the door properly. Even if it did lift the door, the unit would experience an expensive breakdown in only a few months. So it's easy to see, the cheaper option is to replace broken springs first and foremost.

Some service companies provide extended or lifetime warranties on new springs. You should always shop around for a garage door service. Any company that is an **IDA Member** is typically your best bet. **Tip: Check YELP for good reviews as well.**

► **OPERATOR SAFETY:** As of January 1993, all garage door motor operators sold in the USA must have an external safety device that detects an obstruction and will reverse the door to the open position. Furthermore, every operator has a built-in force detector that will also detect an obstruction and will reverse the door to the open position. This built-in device is less sensitive than the typical photo sensors that are mounted on both sides of the garage door. The built-in force detectors can be adjusted back to a more sensitive state by adjusting the force settings to a minimum level.

Check the operations manual for instructions on how to test the safety devices. You can test this by placing your hands under a closing door when at the midway point, and you should be able to force the door to reverse its direction.

A better authorized way to test the force is by placing a 2' x 4' piece of wood under the garage door at the center. Note: This test only tells you if the Safety System is working, but the actual downward force can only be determined by grabbing the door and see if it reverses easily. You can adjust the force to be less sensitive and try the door again. I usually can get the minimal down-force with 3 to 5 sequences. *The external sensors only need to be obstructed for 1-second and the door should reverse.*

When properly installed, each sensor should be mounted NO higher than 6 inches from the floor and both sensors will have a small LED that is illuminated. Both systems should be tested by the home owner every month. **If you believe there is a problem, call for service immediately — this would be even more critical if you have children who use the motorized garage door.**

Please Beware! Between 1980 and 1990, over 100 children were trapped & died under a motorized garage door.

All Safety issues will be checked by your service-person during their visit.

Of course, I always make myself available as a resource when safety is the issue. I can be contacted at roythedoorman@gmail.com or my cell; (480) 506-9729.

Don't be afraid to reach out — There are NO dumb questions and we would love to hear from you.

Everyone at Guardian are industry professionals and always ready to provide friendly customer service.

Roy Bardowell, CDDC, served as Operations Manager at Guardian Access & Door Hardware until 2012.

He has been in the door and operator industry since 1973 and is known as one of the industry's most experienced operator technicians and trainers. Roy received the IDEA Commitment to Excellence award in 2008 and IDA's Jerry R. Reynolds Volunteer Service Award in 2017.

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