

I'm grateful for those who have taken the time to comment. I especially appreciate those who seem to understand that this is a problem which needs to be taken care of. I'm thankful for the caring thoughts expressed and want you to know that there are [many families](#) who have been impacted just as mine has.

Just so you know, Congress has told Secretary Buttigieg to determine if a side guard regulation would be cost effective. For those who want underride protection to be mandatory, please sign and share this petition for USDOT to make side underride guards mandatory on new trucks: [Secretary Pete, It's Past Time To End Death By Underride!](#)

My truck crash occurred ten years ago on May 4, 2013. It involved a [too-weak](#) rear underride guard that came off the truck. I was headed from our home of nine months in North Carolina in my Crown Vic with the youngest three of our nine children. We were driving back to Texas for four of our older kids' college graduations and our oldest daughter's wedding -- a big family celebration where we'd all be together. My husband, Jerry, stayed home to work that week and he'd be flying out on Friday for the rehearsal dinner.

When we got on I-20 in Georgia before getting to Atlanta, I slowed down for a traffic back-up. A truck driver did not. For whatever reason, he hit my car so that we spun around and went backwards into the rear of another tractor-trailer. The rear underride guard on that truck came off onto the ground and the back of our car went under the truck. AnnaLeah (17) and Mary (13) were sitting in the back seat. AnnaLeah died instantly and Mary a few days later at the hospital from her unspeakable injuries. My son in the front seat was discharged from ER that night with a minor concussion and I was in the hospital (two hours from Mary's) for almost a week, although I'm physically fine now. We survived because our part of the car did not go under the truck; it did not come into our survival space. It's not the crash that kills; it's the underride.

When I learned that the federal standard had been proven by IIHS to be too weak, that one manufacturer had designed a stronger guard, and that hundreds of people die every year under trucks, I became a mom on a mission to make truck crashes more survivable.

Not only that, but I learned that underride also occurs under the **side** and the **front** of trucks and that engineers know how to solve those problems -- for not only the occupants of passenger vehicles but for pedestrians and cyclists as well. [Pedestrian-Bike Side Guards for Trucks: How They Work](#) So I have become an advocate for [COMPREHENSIVE](#) underride protection. What I do will never bring AnnaLeah and Mary back to this life, but I sure hope that it will [save others](#) from senseless tragedies that could have been prevented.

Underride can happen to anyone at any time any where. In the blink of an eye. Unexpected. Traumatic. Violent. Unimaginable. Devastating to those left behind. Here's a glimpse of the tip of the iceberg of underride victims (over 700 of which I found from just the last few years): [A Record of Those Remembered in the Underride Victim Vigil](#)

My anger is due to an understanding that the problem could have been solved by those who knew about it before my daughters died. But beyond that, efforts to bring about change are STILL being OPPOSED or IGNORED. We can't wait for industry to voluntarily take action; they've had [decades](#) to do so. The record shows that we need to hold our federal safety agencies accountable to use their authority to protect the public.

Secretary Buttigieg holds the power to make this happen. Let him know that you want him to issue a side underride guard regulation -- giving engineers a green light, trailer manufacturers a level playing field, and protection for all road users from a known unreasonable risk. [Secretary Pete, It's Past Time To End Death By Underride!](#)

You can also let him know that you want him to establish a **Victim Advocate** at USDOT to make sure that TIMELY action is taken for all kinds of traffic safety issues. [STOP Senseless Roadway Deaths: Give Victims a Voice](#)

Also, contact your U.S. Senators and Representative. Let them know that you want them to support comprehensive underride protection -- front, side, and rear. Ask them to co-sponsor the [STOP Underrides Act](#).

For another in-depth underride investigative report, see the PBS/Frontline/ProPublica documentary, [America's Dangerous Trucks](#), and articles from June 2023: [So, what did you think of the PBS/Frontline Underride Documentary?](#)

For those who are concerned about the added **WEIGHT** of guards, these guards are 600 pounds or less. And most trucks don't exceed the weight limit for their freight. As for the cost, like any new technology, the cost will go down when it is mass produced. And a regulation will level the playing field for the trailer manufacturers. Many of them already have patents, but they're waiting for a [standard](#) to be issued by NHTSA before they'll stick their necks out.

Of course, **cost** is always a big topic. Find out some important facts about that here: [Unguarded and Unsafe: Death by Underride](#)

Don't even get me started on speed or undercounted deaths or blaming the victim [arguments](#). And just to [set the record straight](#), my daughters were not driving the car. Even if they had been, this is not about establishing blame for these crashes; this is about making truck crashes, however they happen, more survivable.

**To clear up some apparent confusion about the crash testing recorded in the Inside Edition broadcast, consider these facts:**

- The two cars shown in the test were not the exact same make & model, but they are from a similar family of vehicles. The engineer, [Aaron Kiefer](#), overseeing the testing made sure that we would be comparing apples to apples.

- Some seemed to think that my reaction was contrived and that I'd probably seen these tests 100x. Actually, each of the 4 tests, which we did on August 3, were ones we had *not* done before; they were experimental in nature. See more details about that [here](#).
- And even for those who have not lost a loved one in an underride crash, those crash tests are very visceral -- the adrenaline of the anticipation, the sounds, the sights. And it's over in the blink of an eye.
- Seeing a test into an unguarded trailer is always emotionally-charged, as the devastating underride crash is a vivid reminder of what I lived through and how my beloved daughters had their lives abruptly snatched from them -- not to mention the horrific and unimaginable trauma and grief we have endured in the ensuing hours, days, and years.
- In contrast, seeing a successful test (which by the way takes a lot of hard work in preparation and execution), especially if we've just proven something new, is exciting, satisfying, and rewarding -- knowing that we've witnessed a solution for saving lives. At the same time, it is bittersweet because that kind of technology was not installed on the truck and my daughters did not benefit from engineering ingenuity.
- I could see a 1000 crash tests and still go through those emotions for as long as I live.
- Anything that might have seemed like it was staged would have been due to the skill and dedication of the amazing Inside Edition photographer/videographer, who was determined to make sure that the story you would see did not miss any detail. He even scrambled under the trailer to properly place a camera seconds before the countdown to start a crash test. However, none of that meant my reactions were anything less than genuine.

Many people commented on **potential side guard operational issues**. Believe me, I have, too, and have researched the topic thoroughly. If you're truly concerned about side guards getting hung up on railroad tracks and causing problems, please join the discussion with an open mind and read these posts loaded with information:

- [Should we be concerned about side guards getting hung up on railroad tracks?](#)
- [Taking On a Safety Issue: Hazardous Railroad Crossings](#)
- [Operational Issues with AngelWing Side Guard](#)
- [Transport Companies Provide Feedback on Side Guard Operational Issues](#)

For those who think that **Automatic Emergency Braking** on cars can solve the underride problem, consider the fact that AEB doesn't recognize the side of a trailer. In 2016, a Tesla car went under the side of a trailer and down the road -- killing the driver. This is not the only one. Read this article: [U.S. safety agency probes 'violent' Tesla crash in Detroit](#)

The reality is that **collision avoidance technology** may slow a vehicle down, but if there is still a collision -- even at a slow speed -- deadly underride can occur. A car's safety features -- including the crumple zone, bumper, airbags and seatbelts -- aren't able to protect car occupants when the car goes under a truck.

Plus, even as collision avoidance technology improves, it will be years before the whole fleet of passenger vehicles are equipped with the latest and greatest. Why wouldn't we do BOTH/AND? Both Collision Avoidance and Occupant Protection?

I was in that crash. I know that it wasn't the crash that killed my daughters; it was the underride. Underride occurs because of a geometric mismatch. The bottom of a large truck is higher than the bumpers of passenger vehicles -- even large SUVs and pick-up trucks. So when there is a collision, the lower vehicle easily slides under -- especially when there is no side guard and even when there is a rear underride guard which meets the current federal standard (which the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety has proven is [too weak](#)).

I'm grateful for people taking time to watch this video and make a comment. Please see my website to read all about underride. Start with this post: [Basic Underride Information](#)

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And if you've got some time left over, after digging into this previously hidden and neglected problem, take a look at this video which records the making a very special memorial bench, which my husband and I asked a chainsaw woodcarver to make last year. It helps us remember AnnaLeah and Mary as they lived instead of how they died: [The Making of a Very Special Bench: Into the West](#)

Please let me know if there are any questions which I have not answered or addressed. Thank you for caring enough to comment and/or learn more about this preventable problem.