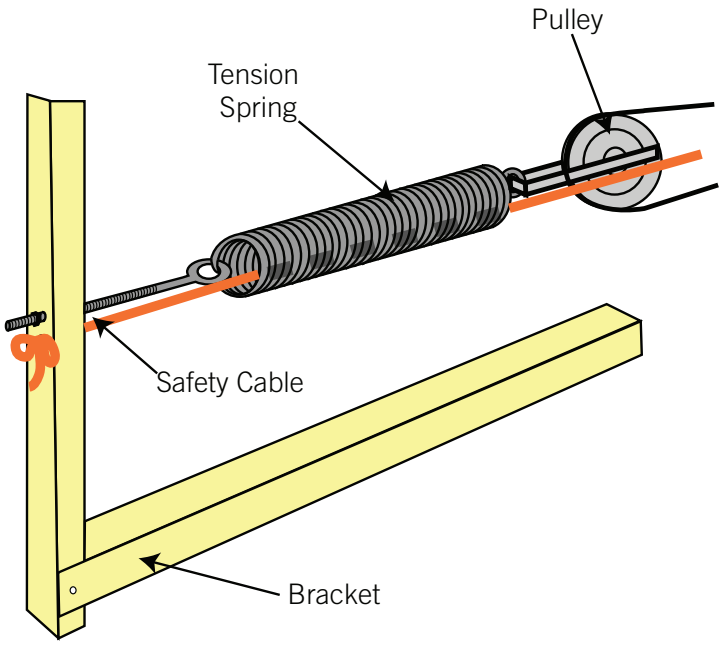
Garage Door Safety

Your garage vehicle door may be the largest moving object in your home and could weigh up to 400 pounds. For your safety make sure it's in good condition.

Overhead garage doors have gravity to deal with. In the absence of some type of balancing mechanism, the door would slam shut as soon as you let go of it. Older garage doors may employ a weight and pulley system to balance the weight of the door however virtually all modern systems use springs. Regardless of the method used, the door should balance. If you open the garage door about half way and let go, it should balance there.



Spring failure

The springs used to balance the weight of the door are under enormous stress. If a spring were to break, flying pieces of metal could cause serious injury. Modern spring systems incorporate safety features to prevent flying metal in the event of a spring failure. For example, extension springs should have a cable running down the middle of the spring to contain the spring upon failure.

Automatic opener

Automatic door openers are not a replacement for a properly balanced door. The opener is not powerful enough to lift the entire weight of the door. The opener works with the help of the springs or counter balance system.

An automatic garage door opener should stop and reverse on meeting an obstruction. Many systems manufactured prior to 1982 may stop but not reverse. These older systems should be upgraded. This is not only about protecting your car, it's about protecting people.

Today, some form of external entrapment protection is required. An electric eye is the most common system used. The electric eye is mounted 5 to 6 inches off the floor and senses objects in its path. If your garage door opener does not have an electric eye system, you may be able to upgrade it without replacing the entire system.

Emergency release

During a power failure the garage door may be impossible to open. Since 1982, automatic garage door openers have an emergency release to disengage the garage door from the opener. Once disengaged, you can open the door by hand. Make sure you know where this is and how to operate it. It is usually a short rope hanging from the unit. Pulling the rope disengages the door from the automatic door opening mechanism.

A Few More Pointers on Garage Doors

- Keep it in good shape: Your garage door may require periodic lubrication and adjustment. An overhead garage door that is poorly maintained may pose a threat to your safety. Hiring a garage door expert to inspect and adjust the system is a good idea.
- Pinch hazard: Sectional overhead garage doors pose a pinch hazard to fingers. Never put your fingers in the space between door sections to close the door, use the provided handles. Some modern sectional garage doors have a 'pinch proof' design.
- Security: The remote control for your automatic opener is like a key to your garage. When you move into a home, you should change the remote control settings just as you would change the locks on your doors. If the codes for your automatic opener cannot be changed, it probably also lacks other key safety features of a more modern system. You should consider upgrading.
- Educate children: Kids need to know that garage doors are dangerous. Bikes and toys should never be left in the path of the garage door while the door is open. Make sure they know that they should not play with the remote control. Mount the door activation button five feet from the ground, out of reach.