

CHILD SAFETY SEATS AND SAFETY BELTS

Child safety seats and safety belts, when installed and used properly, can prevent injuries and save lives. Each year, an estimated 975 child occupants under 14 years of age die as a result of a motor vehicle incident. Young children restrained in child safety seats have an 80 percent lower risk of fatal injury than those who are unrestrained.

In 2005, more than 1,400 child occupants died in motor vehicle crashes and nearly half were unrestrained.

More than 203,000 occupants under 14 years of age were injured in motor vehicle crashes in 2005.

From 1993 to 2002, there were 159 reported fatal injuries to children less than 12 years of age associated with airbag deployment. Of the total child fatalities 69.2 percent were unrestrained and 29.6 percent were improperly restrained.

For children ages 0 to 8, restraint use has increased from 15 percent in 1999 to 73 percent in 2005.

Children are more likely to be properly restrained when the driver is properly restrained.

In a study observing the misuse of 3,442 child restraint systems (CRS) in six states, approximately 73 percent of CRSs showed at least one critical misuse. 84 percent of infant seats showed critical misuses. Booster seat misuse was 41 percent.

The most common form of misuses for all CRSs included loose vehicle seat belt attachment to the CRS and loose harness straps securing the child to the CRSs.

Who is at Risk

African American children ages 4-7 have the lowest restraint use among children ages 4 to 7, an estimated 26 percent are not restrained while riding in a motor vehicle. Asian children have the highest restraint use, followed by white and Hispanic children.

Children 2 to 5 years of age using safety belts prematurely are four times more likely to suffer a serious head injury in a crash than those restrained in child safety seats or booster seats.

Car Seats, Booster Seats and Seat Belts

Child Restraint System Effectiveness:

Child safety seats reduce fatal injury in passenger cars by 71 percent for infants less than 1 year old and by 54 percent for toddlers 1 to 4 years of age. For children 4 to 7 years of age, booster seats have shown to reduce injury risk by 59 percent compared to safety belts alone.

Among children under 5 years of age, 451 lives were saved in 2004 due to child restraint use. Of these 451 lives saved, the use of child safety seats was responsible for 413 saved lives and the use of safety belts saved 38 lives.

An estimated 1,700 children's lives were saved between 1996 and 2002 solely because they were seated in a back seat.

An estimated 81 percent of children ages 8-15 use a safety belt, and only 68 percent of all occupants use a safety belt in the back seat.

Safety Interventions

Ensure that every occupant is properly restrained for every ride.

Always follow manufacturer's instructions. Infants should ride in rear-facing child safety seats as long as possible (a minimum of 12 months old and 20 pounds).

Correctly secure children that weigh between 20 and 40 pounds in a forward facing child safety seat.

Always use the safety seat tether for optimal protection.

Correctly secure children over 40 pounds in a booster seat or other appropriate child restraint until the adult lap and shoulder safety belts fit correctly (approximately 4'9" and 80-100 pounds, usually between 8 and 12 years of age).

Return the product registration card provided for all new child safety seats to the manufacturer to ensure you will be notified of any recalls.

Check www.recalls.gov to inquire about any recalls or safety notices on child safety seats.

Avoid purchasing safety seats from yard sales, flea markets and second hand stores or when there is no known history of the seat.



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