

# Child Seat Safety

Make  
Every  
A Safe Trip

The purpose of this circular is to provide information to enhance people's knowledge and awareness of traffic enforcement and traffic safety issues.

## PRESENTATION

Traffic collisions are the leading cause of death among children ages 5 to 14 and the results are staggering; more than 500 are killed and 95,000 are injured annually. Many of these deaths and injuries could have been prevented if the children were properly restrained in seat belts or child safety seats. When children outgrow forward-facing child safety seats, they need to be restrained in belt-positioning booster seats until they are big enough to fit properly in an adult seat belt.

Things to remember when transporting children or using child safety / booster seats in a vehicle:

- All children ages 12 and under should sit in the back seat properly restrained. The rear seat is the safest place for children.
- Never use pillows, books, or towels to boost the height of a child. They can slide around and increase the likelihood of injury.
- Make sure everyone is buckled up correctly. Infants and very young children should be in child safety seats. Young children should be correctly buckled using a booster seat.
- Read the instructions for the child safety or booster seat and your vehicle owner's manual before installing them. If the vehicle has only lap belts in the back seat, consider having shoulder belts installed by a dealer or repair facility. Most vehicle manufacturers offer retrofit shoulder belt kits for this purpose.
- After installing a child safety or booster seat, don't forget to test for a snug and secure fit. Properly fitting lap and shoulder belts reduce the risk for belt-induced injuries, which can occur when lap or lap / shoulder belts are a small child's only restraint.
- Always fill out and mail the registration card that comes with the safety / booster seat so notifications can be made in case of a recall.

Effective January 1, 2002, California's new booster seat law mandates that children who is under age six-regardless of weight, or is under 60 pounds-regardless of age, be properly secured in a child restraint. The new law is meant to close the safety gap for children who have outgrown infant car seats, but are not big enough to be protected by adult safety belts. Booster seats are required by law to comply with the same standards and guidelines as child safety seats. When buying a booster seat, make sure it has a label stating the child restraint system conforms to all applicable United States Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. Never use a booster seat that has been in a crash. The seat may have defects that are not visible.

Violation of this new law, which involves the following sections in the California Vehicle Code, will bring fines of \$100 for a first offense and \$250 thereafter:

- 27360(a) CVC - A parent / guardian is cited for each child who is under age six, regardless of weight, or under 60 pounds, regardless of age, and not properly secured in a child restraint which meets federal safety standards.
- 27360(b) CVC - If parent / guardian is not present, the driver is cited for each child who is under age six, regardless of weight, or under 60 pounds, regardless of age, and not properly secured in a child restraint which meets federal safety standards.
- 27360.5(a) CVC - A parent / guardian is cited for each child who is at least six years of age and 60 pounds or more but under age 16 and is not properly secured in a vehicle safety belt.
- 27360.5(b) CVC - If parent / guardian is not present, the driver is cited for each child who is at least six years of age and 60 pounds or more but under age 16 and is not properly secured in a vehicle safety belt.

## The 15 Minute Check

### Child Positions

**Rear facing:** To one year and 20 lbs. or more in seats with weight limits to 30 lbs. and up.

**Forward facing:** From one year and 20 lbs. to 4 years old or to the weight limit of the harness, usually to 40 lbs.

- Correct 45° angle for infants, 30° at 6 months
- Route belt correctly
- Correct seat for child's weight and sitting height
- Harness at or below shoulders
- Chest retainer clip at armpit level
- Never with passenger side airbag!
- Fully upright
- Route belt correctly
- Correct seat for child's weight, sitting height, stature, and development
- Harness at or above shoulders and always at top slot unless specified differently in instructions
- Chest retainer clip at armpit level

### Safety Seats

- Have and follow manufacturer's instructions
- Use the manufacture date and model number to check recalls; replace seat if no dates are found or seat is nearly 10 years old
- Keep harnesses snug - do the no pinching of the harness webbing test

- Check harness splitter plate and locking devices, like slides; the harness must be complete and it must lock
- Tether safety seats using the automobile owner's manual and manufacturer's recommendations
- Never use a safety seat that has been in a crash
- Keep children in safety seats with a harness until they outgrow them by weight or height, then use belt positioning boosters.

#### Boosters

- Use belt-positioning boosters with lap shoulder belts in order to provide upper body protection (never apply a locking clip to a shoulder lap belt that is crossing a child's body)
- Install special harnesses and vests that are tethered to the auto for use with lap belts
- Choose newer products that have features for heavier, taller, children; harness weight limits above 40 lbs.; and provide solutions for lap belt use

#### Car Belts

- Identify automobile belt systems and function using the car owner's manual
- Install seats securely using full body weight to press restraint into car cushion
- Use the shortest lap belt measurement and be sure that measurement is locked
- Pay attention to special accessories and special installation directions some car manufacturers mandate
- Use the correct locking clip when appropriate for emergency locking restraints
- Proper installation means LESS THAN 1 MOVEMENT forward or sideways when tugged at the belt path
- Follow vehicle and safety restraint instructions for newly standardized LATCH system installations and tethers

#### Boosters Are For Big Kids

Did you know most kids need to ride in a booster seat from about age 4 until at least age 8?



wrong



correct

If your child isn't using a booster, try this simple test the next time you ride together in the car.

#### The 5-Step Test

1. Does the child sit all the way back against the auto seat?
2. Do the child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the auto seat?
3. Does the belt cross the shoulder between the neck and arm?
4. Is the lap belt as low as possible, touching the thighs?
5. Can the child stay seated like this for the whole trip?

If you answered no to any of these questions, your child needs a booster seat to ride safely in the car. Kids like boosters because they are more comfortable, too!

#### Downloadable brochures in PDF

- Kids and Airbags Don't Mix
- A Tether is Better
- Selecting the Right Car Seat for Your Child
- Laws for Parents

#### Links

- American Academy of Pediatrics
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
- Safety Belt Safe