

*Happy  
Anniversary*

January 29, 1980, was a special day when 15 Angelenos decided to band together to fight the mounting losses of children on the highway. With high optimism at the 1<sup>st</sup> California statewide conference for child passenger safety (CPS), we surely did not expect to celebrate a 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The conference featured both technical and programmatic sessions but allotted time for attendees from 10 different regions of the state to meet and confer, leading to that decision for Los Angeles County.

It was not until 10 years later, when national organizations in the field were closing their doors, that we took a national name to be more welcoming to our outside-Los Angeles members and volunteers.

Our technical focus and national face included successfully petitioning National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) for shoulder-lap belts to be required in back seats of vehicles, coordinating a NHTSA-funded team to hold Educator Workshops in every state, and serving on the national Blue Ribbon Panel on Safety Seat and Vehicle Compatibility.

We welcome all of our supporters, both individuals and organizations, to keep our technical materials and campaigns viable as we go forward.

## Car Seats 201: A Summary

The Kidz in Motion conference workshop by Erin Brill, CPSTI, of Colorado went into the many variable details of safety seats on the market today. As Brill graciously stated, the SBS USA tool, *Child Restraint Manufacturers' Instructions with Summaries*, was a useful resource both for working with seats and compiling her interesting, informative materials.

In November, we reviewed her take on four major areas of safety seat use assessment, including tricks for tightening belts and lower connectors and seats using both belt and lower connectors; lock-offs and tensioning plates; "European belt paths;" and "infant inserts."

Additional areas to consider include crotch buckle adjustment, special set-ups in convertible seats for newborns; recline adjustments for rear facing and forward facing; and unusual features of some seats. As manufacturers strive to address the variability of safety seat users' needs, new ideas continue to emerge.

The crotch strap on the harness buckle once was fixed. However, as seats became multi-functional covering a broader range of child sizes, changes were needed to make sure the buckle was close to but not underneath the child.

Coping with a large range of vehicle seat styles, manufacturers addressed recline angles in several ways. Initially, a tightly rolled towel or even newspaper roll in the vehicle seat bight, later mostly replaced by the pool noodle, was used to get safe rear-facing angles for newborns. Now, manufacturers strive to develop a more specific approach. Reclining a safety seat forward facing used to be avoided. Currently, some companies list various angles.

The ingenuity of designers in the many companies making seats is impressive which makes it all the more useful to have the Summaries which, in 1-3 pages in a consistent format, point Technicians to the key aspects of the necessarily lengthy instruction manuals, making it less likely that the Technician will miss a key point. In future issues, we'll share more Tech details from the presentation.

## Thank You

**\$2900** AAA No CA, NV & UT  
**\$2000** OTS Minnesota  
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**\$250** Lori Jacobs  
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 Diane & Michael Poryes  
 Randall Children's Hospital  
 at Legacy Emmanuel  
 Becky Thams  
 UAMS/Injury Prevention Center  
 UCSF Benioff Children's Hosp.

## EDUCATOR WORKSHOP:

Sponsored by CA  
 Office of Traffic  
 Safety (OTS),  
 Pomona P.D., and  
 San Fernando P.D.  
 8:15 am-5 pm. Six CEs for Nurses,  
 courtesy Harbor-UCLA Medical  
 Center. 3.5 CEUs for CPSTs  
**\*1/23/20:** San Fernando, CA  
 Free; participants receive \$50 CPS  
 Reference and Teaching Guide  
 free. This is a good precursor to  
 Certification Training; special  
 Treasure Hunt for CPSTs.



## SAFETY SEAT CHECKUP:

10 am-2 pm for families;  
 9 am-3 pm for checkers  
**\*1/24/20:** San Fernando, CA  
 Register at 800/745-SAFE

An SBS USA CPST Certification  
 training is expected later this  
 winter.

## CONFERENCE:

**\*3/15-17:** Lifesavers, Tampa, FL.  
[www.lifesaversconference.org](http://www.lifesaversconference.org)

## Recall update:

On 2/28/19, 28,000 of the  
**Dorel** China America Babideal  
 Storm Booster, made without  
 required safety warnings and  
 instructions, were listed as not  
 appropriate for use in vehicles.

The products are car-usable, and  
 new compliant replacement covers  
 can be requested at 877/657-9546.

The **Merritt Manufacturing**  
 Angel Ride Car Bed, made 8/8/19  
 to 10/24/19: harness may not be  
 sewn correctly at the buckle  
 attachment. Although the  
 company believes it has reached all  
 customers directly, a free  
 replacement harness may be  
 ordered at 317/409-0148.

## New Seats

**Chicco** introduced the Fit4, a  
 convertible/combination seat for  
 kids 4-40 lbs. rear facing, 25-65  
 lbs. forward facing, and 40-100 lbs.  
 as a booster seat. Lower anchor  
 weight limits are 35 lbs. rear facing  
 and 40 lbs. forward facing.

The seat features a no-rethread  
 harness, a 2-position crotch strap,  
 and lock-offs for installation in  
 harness modes. The seat has a  
 ten-year life and features a series of  
 positioning pillows for use at  
 various weights.

The Solution Z-Fix is available  
 from **Goodbaby Cybex**. This  
 highback booster is for kids 33-120  
 lbs. There are twelve headrest  
 positions plus an adjustable width.  
 The headrest can be reclined. The  
 seat features linear side-impact  
 protection, rigid lower connectors,  
 and a 9-year life.

**Goodbaby Evenflo** introduced  
 the EveryFit, for kids 4-40 lbs. rear  
 facing, 22-65 lbs. and at least two  
 years old forward facing with  
 harness, 40-120 lbs. and at least 4  
 years old in booster mode, with or  
 without the backrest. There is a  
 no-rethread harness, a 12-position  
 headrest, and a 10-year expiration.

The seat will be marketed  
 exclusively in Walmart as the  
 EveryKid beginning this month.

**Graco** introduced Grows4Me, a  
 convertible/combination seat for  
 kids 4-40 lbs. rear facing, 22-65  
 lbs. forward facing, 40-100 lbs. as  
 a highback booster, and 40-110 lbs.  
 as a backless booster.

The seat features a no-rethread  
 harness, a 10-position headrest, 6  
 recline positions, and a 10-year  
 expiration.

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.

Office:

514 N. Prospect Ave., L-6,  
 Redondo Beach, CA 90277  
 (310) 318-5111 (also FAX)  
 (800)745-SAFE  
 (800)747-SANO

URL: [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org)

Mail:

Box 553  
 Altadena, CA 91003

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Stephanie M. Tombrello,  
 LCSW, CPSTI

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

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\* E-mail address is required to receive passwords for access to Recall List and CPS Tech Update.

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## Incorrect Use

The range of estimates for the rate of error among safety seat users is broad, based possibly on whether each issue is counted or only those considered “serious.” SBS USA finds that in some cases, it is the volume of small incorrect choices that spurs on the effort to combat this longstanding issue.

A recent lab-testing assessment conducted at University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute focused on incorrect usage which might affect performance, reported by Miriam Manary et al. in *Traffic Injury Prevention*, 2019, “Effects of child restraint misuse on dynamic performance.” After reviewing previous studies in this area, the team found that misuse was defined as varying from manufacturers’ instructions but left out non-use of tether straps because manufacturers offer options for vehicles without tether anchors. The lowest percentage was 46% when the focus was on errors that reduce crash protection, but the researchers did not note if tethers were in use.

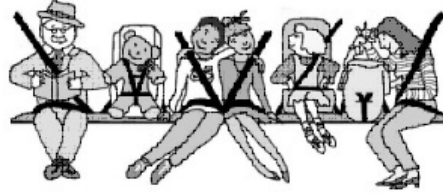
The conclusions of the study direct us to the critical importance of secure installation and for

seats facing forward, attaching the tether strap.

Of all the errors, routing the safety belt/lower connectors through the forward-facing belt path on a rear-facing convertible showed the worst outcome: a 70-degree rotation of the seat which, in a real car, would mean potentially hitting the front seat. For forward-facing seats, loose attachment and no tethering had the largest effects. A tether reduced head excursion by 5.25 inches. Some effects were seen with a loose harness, a misrouted safety belt, and no harness retainer clip. Putting the belt through the wrong path on a forward-facing seat with a loose tether didn’t show much effect, probably due to the way the safety seat rests on the vehicle seat. Although most consider using both safety belt and lower connectors an error, in dynamic testing, it showed no problem, and some manufacturers (see above) suggest it.

Given that rear-facing seats showed less negative performance under misuse conditions, extended rear-facing travel may compensate for the ongoing high levels of incorrect use. The researchers also suggested that convertible seats be shipped with lower connectors in the rear-facing belt path.

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P.O. Box 553  
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***SafetyBeltSafe* News**

**January 2020**

## **It Started with Startling Ads....**

When we first saw the ads online for fabric “car seats,” SBS USA staff were appalled and referred the issue to NHTSA. But as 2019 ends, the prevalence and significance of the sites are troubling, especially as we know adults are buying these items for children who are now put at risk. After Lauren Gravitz’s excellent 11/19 story on the issue of both “fake” and counterfeit seats in *The Washington Post*, stimulated by SBS USA input, the issue began to grow legs and on 12/21, appeared on TV news. NHTSA suggested SBS USA approach U.S. Department of Commerce to link with their StopFakes committee, which might add another tool to stop this sudden influx, the first major assault since the Lin Lih counterfeit in 1988!  
(See *SBS News*, 1988)

Meanwhile, a tragic crash generated a major lawsuit, involving both Ford Motor Co. and Dorel Juvenile Group, according to the *Knoxville (TN) News Sentinel*. Six years ago, Beth Woodruff heard of a nearby incident and, missing her family’s arrival home, rushed there to find her husband dead, their 4-year-old girl in shock, and their 6-year-old boy lying with his head between the girl’s safety seat and the back seat of the Nissan Juke in which they were riding. It appeared that the safety belt had malfunctioned, but his hips were still in his booster. Ethan has made progress since 2013 but still has major brain damage to overcome.

The case against the 4-time-DUI driver who caused the crash was over early on, but the civil suit against Ford and Dorel Juvenile Group is ongoing 6 years later. Ms. Woodruff has pursued it to reveal the trap into which her husband had fallen.

Because the safety belt buckle in the back seat was recessed, it was hard to buckle the booster. Looking for a fix, Mr. Woodruff found safety belt extenders for sale on the Internet. Indeed, it turns out that a Ford dealership employee realized that for pennies he could order safety belt extenders from Ford and sell them for \$15 each online.

Finding this tool to re-position the buckle by adding a second buckle, Ethan’s dad added it to the belt used with his son’s booster. The court case is to identify blame for the son’s long-term injuries. However, Beth is clear on the second goal: to alert parents about the risk of using a safety belt extender if grasping the buckle is difficult for booster use.

A safety belt extender is meant to be personalized for a large adult in a vehicle in which the belt latchplate does not reach the buckle. It is free from the manufacturer of the vehicle when needed. It is never to be used on a child or, as in the Woodruff case, used in a vehicle that differs from the extender source. The Nissan Juke manual explicitly forbade use of an extender, even from Nissan. Using a Ford extender purchased online is exactly what should *not* be done. Ignorance on the part of the seller and buyer led to the disaster for Ethan who appears to have a lifelong struggle to master both physical and mental tasks.

There are many parts to the litigation; for those in CPS, the message is clear. Like the rest of the “fakes and counterfeits,” this information about belt extenders needs to be broadcast widely.

SBS USA has developed three flyers in English and Spanish especially for parents and non-Technicians addressing fakes and counterfeits, available at [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org).