

SafetyBeltSafe News

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July 2003



Ratings, Ratings Everywhere!

CU Ratings Article Included General Tips

In the May issue of *SBS News*, the highlights of the ratings of safety seats provided in the May 2003 issue of *Consumer Reports* were reported. Due to space limitations, additional comments were held for this issue. SBS USA staff were not alone in noting some problems with the general tips included in the article.

SBS USA member **Darren Qunell** of [car-safety.org](http://www.car-safety.org) wrote CU, reminding them that implying that children over 20 lbs. and one year *should* ride forward facing did not reflect best practice. SBS USA recommends that children be placed in convertible seats certified for use up to at least 30 lbs. and ride facing rearward as long as possible. (SBS USA member **Graco** recently requested permission to quote the Technical Encyclopedia at www.carseat.org on this topic.)

It was incorrectly stated that the 45-degree angle is “optimum” for rear-facing seats; only newborns need to be reclined that far. Rear-facing seats actually perform better when they are more upright. Although CU correctly stated that the center rear is the safest seating position in a vehicle, most consumers with a LATCH-equipped vehicle will not find LATCH locations in the center rear position.

SBS USA disagreed with recommendations in the CU article regarding harness adjustment and used seats. It is best to check harness straps for snugness with the “pinch test” rather than the “one-finger” test. There should be no slack whatsoever in the straps. For a used seat, only if it comes from a friend or relative who knows its crash history is it worth the necessary careful inspection, using the manufacturer’s instruction booklet and a current recall list.

NHTSA Ratings; CU and IIHS Representatives Join Press Conference

The initial ratings of safety seats by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in response to a section of the TREAD ACT 2000, were

released in June. The initial results are posted at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/CPS/CSSRating/Index.cfm>.

This is a reasonable first pass for this complicated project, but fine tuning will make it more useful.

The agency stressed that the safety seats were rated for convenience, not safety. However, some convenience factors have such a major impact on safety that they may need to be addressed in federal regulations (FMVSS 213). For instance, despite the near-impossibility of adjusting the harness straps of the Century 1500 when installed correctly in the forward-facing position, this seat received a B for “securing the child” and a B for overall ease of use.

Although NHTSA recommends against using shield boosters for children 30-40 lbs., the Dorel Grand Explorer finished with a B rating, along with 67 others. Scores would be more meaningful if both the range and weighting of scores were increased.

The need for improvements in instructions was pointed out in the ratings. Even with the A-rated Graco Comfort Sport, the instructions show the LATCH straps on the outside of the bottom of the plastic shell when rear facing, but this doesn’t always give a tight fit. Evenflo Tribute was the other straight-A rated safety seat; it has been well received as a seat for institutional safety seat distribution programs, such as the Kragen-funded program for low-income families in Los Angeles and Orange Counties, coordinated through SBS USA. Thirty-nine other seats received an overall A rating.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) has actively pursued the issue of fit between safety seats and vehicles. A recent effort to install LATCH-equipped safety seats in a selection of 10 new vehicles revealed problems in matching also found by child passenger safety (CPS) advocates in the field.

These results must be shared with manufacturers, and government must press on to address these issues.

FAA Rules Ignored

Contrary to FAA recommendations on how to carry kids, which are based on its own research, flight attendants are still trying to force parents to restrain their children facing forward unless they have an infant-only seat. Some parents have been threatened with removal and confiscation of their convertible seats to the baggage area, in violation of the FAA regulation protecting those who have bought tickets from interference, as long as the safety seat is certified for aircraft use.

An ad hoc committee is forming to help achieve uniformity in information for flight attendants and thus prevent inappropriate negative encounters in the future.

To join in the action or share documented experiences, send information to SBS USA via e-mail, telephone, mail, or FAX. In the meantime, be sure to register any of your difficult personal experiences with the FAA at 800/FAA-SURE. Only the party holding a ticket can complain officially at this time.

Watch for more information in SBS News and SAFE RIDE NEWS, both of which will carry updates.

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THANK YOU

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and Morrow
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Recall & Repair Update

Repair kits are available from manufacturers of three infant safety seats and associated travel systems.

Evenflo Company is offering a free "safety upgrade kit" for the base of all Cozy Carry seats. The plastic tabs could break if the shoulder belt is threaded under them. Call 800/582-6698.

Dorel Juvenile Products has extended an existing recall for defective handles on the Cosco Arriva and Turnabout infant safety seats. Until they are repaired, the seats should not be used as carriers but may be used in vehicles. The recall applies to model #02-665, 02-667, 02-727 through 733, and 02-750 through 774 made 3/1/95 to 1/31/00. Call 800/880-9435 for a repair kit.

CALENDAR

CONFERENCES

***9/22-24:** CA Conf on Childhood Injury Control: will cover national issues. LAX Radisson Hotel. More info at 619/594-3691 or **www.cipp.org**
***3/28-30/04:** Lifesavers 2004 **www.lifesaversconference.org** - San Diego. Call 703/922-7944 .

CERTIFICATION TRAINING

***7/31-8/1 and 8/4-8/5:** Gardena, CA. Registration fee - \$950 Scholarships of up to \$500 available for individuals & representatives of non-profits who plan to stay in the field at least 2 years. Thanks to Nissan North America for providing these funds. Call 626/968-6555 to apply.

SAFETY SEAT CHECKUP

*Call SBS USA to register
Trained checkers are needed!*
Parents: Register at 310/222-6860
***8/6:** 10 am - 2 pm, Location TBA

Brochure Updated

The newest version, 25th edition, of the 4-color brochure, *The Perfect Gift: Your Child's Safety* in English or Spanish, is now available from SBS USA. Due to updates in content as well as a complete revision of the seat listing, it is time to discard older versions.

SBS USA has been able to hold the cost to \$.15 each plus shipping and handling. CA residents should add 8.25% sales tax.

The brochure is designed as the basis for an educational presentation or checkup consultation as well as for individual parents, offering drawings of children of all ages from birth to safety belt user.

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Startling News

In June, American Automobile Association (AAA) announced its decision to withdraw by December 2003 from managing the nuts and bolts of the certification process, such as receiving information on new Technicians and Instructors and distributing and grading recertification materials.

This follows on the heels of the troubling loss of access to Professional Liability insurance for those whose employers cannot protect them, either because they cannot afford blanket policies or because the person in question is a volunteer or vendor who is not always operating under the aegis of a particular entity.

NHTSA assures the CPS community that a "seamless change" will occur, so that no one need worry about the status of the program. Other changes are in progress as well as NHTSA pulls out of providing the written curricula and devolves the responsibility on the states, just when CPS is no longer being stated as a priority for funding through 402 grants.

To keep apprised of the unfolding situation, visit www.cpsboard.org or call/e-mail Carole Guzzetta at 202-366-3665 or cguzzetta@nhtsa.dot.gov.

Outstanding Results Reported by Partners for Child Passenger Safety

In line with the many gems compiled and shared from the largest detailed study of children in crashes to date, comes excellent support for the concept of booster use. Data from the study by Partners for Child Passenger Safety show that there is a 59% reduction in injury for children ages 4 to 7 when boosters are in use, not just safety belts. Moreover, those using boosters had no injuries to the abdomen, neck/spine/back, or lower extremity.

Children using belts alone had injuries in every body region. [Seven years old was the top age noted, because so few children over that age are in boosters.]

The full paper by Drs. Dennis Durbin, Michael Elliott, and Flaura Winston is in the June 4th issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

In response to this research, California Senator Jackie Speier announced plans to increase coverage of the CA law specifying the use of child restraints to age 7. Since all occupants in CA vehicles must ride buckled up correctly, there is already legal backing for citations for the children over the current specified age who do not meet the 5-Step Test for using safety belts alone.

Kudos to UCLA MEDICAL CENTER

A recent photo in the Los Angeles Times showed one of two originally conjoined twins from Guatemala returning for additional medical care. Clearly visible was the safety seat buckled onto the gurney on which she traveled to the hospital.

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SafetyBeltSafe News

July 2003

NHTSA Publishes Final Rule

In response to the 2000 TREAD Act, NHTSA has been working on a range of CPS improvements, which included reviewing the test procedures to be used for certifying safety seats.

In June, the Final Rule was issued relating to the test bench and dummies to be used. Comments will be received until 8/8/03 on Docket #NHTSA-03-15351, c/o Administrator, Rm 5220, NHTSA, 400 7th St SW, Washington DC 20590.

Although the schedule allowed by TREAD was too short to address either rear- or side-impact crash testing and the 10-year-old dummy is not yet ready for use in certification, NHTSA intends to expand certification requirements to safety restraints labeled for children up to 65 lbs. A 12-month dummy will replace the 9-month, new 3- and 6-year dummies will be used, and a weighted 6-year dummy (62 lbs.) will test large safety seat strength until the 10-year dummy is ready.

The crash pulse will also be updated to allow for testing closer to 30 mph, and the test bench slope, back, and belt anchor locations will be more like those in rear seats of current vehicles where safety seats are used.

Research programs on possible mitigation of side and rear impacts for children will be investigated, focusing on issues and procedures being considered in Europe as well as in the U.S.

The announcement in the Federal Register also noted that aspects of the TREAD Act which could not be completed under the specified timetable will be explained to Congress and that the ratings of seat ease-of-use have been released concurrently.

The efficacy of the rear seat in protecting children is becoming more evident. The reductions in deaths and injuries are manifest from numerous studies, making this one of the most important recommendations.

Child Safety Month

California expects to celebrate Child Safety in October 2003, according to Alina Bueno of Child Safety Collaborative coordinated by the Harbor-UCLA/REI Childhood Injury Prevention Center.

The main event will be on October 18th in Los Angeles. Invitations have already been sent to numerous school districts to alert them to the concept of a special focus for the month.

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. plans to hold a 5-Step Test event on the 18th. A recent effort in Alhambra attracted 50 children ages 3 to 12. Only the 12-year-old met the 5-Step Test fully, while two 10-year-olds, with concentration, might have done it!

This startled both parents and children, who were profuse in their thanks. For more information, e-mail Abueno@rei.edu or call 310-222-2331.



Health Net of California believes that safety is in everyone's best interest. As a health plan dedicated to wellness and prevention, we are pleased to support the community services of SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.