

# SafetyBeltSafe News

Volume 24, No. 5



September 2003

## LABELING

### 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 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](http://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.

## State Farm Insurance Renews Support

With a Program Sponsorship of \$15,000 for 2003-4, State Farm is funding three SBS USA program areas, touching both grassroots and international users of SBS USA services. Funds have been earmarked to

1) hold an Educator Workshop with corresponding safety seat checkup as well as assisting with the special national State Farm checkup date in May 2004;

2) support Speakers' Bureau events, especially those that involve 5-Step Test events, such as the one in Alhambra last May when, of 50 children who tried, only one 12 year old truly fit in the belt system unassisted by a booster; and

3) contribute toward the ongoing creation of current technical material at [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org).

### REMINDER

*The membership renewal period for 2004 begins October 1, 2003. Don't delay!*

### SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.

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

Office: 1124 W. Carson St.

REI, Building B-1 West

Torrance, CA 90502

(310)222-6860 - English

(310)222-6862 - Spanish

(800)745-SAFE

(800)747-SANO

FAX: (310)222-6862

Mail: Box 553

Altadena, CA 91003

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Stephanie M. Tombrello, L.C.S.W.

#### NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Kellie L. Mzik

## CALENDAR

### CONFERENCE

**\*3/28-30/04:** Lifesavers 2004  
[www.lifesaversconference.org](http://www.lifesaversconference.org) -  
San Diego, CA. Call 703-922-7944 .

### CERTIFICATION TRAINING

Planned for January 2004, San Bernardino, CA. Call for application and details: 626/968-6555

### WORKSHOPS

**\*10/4/03:** Introductory Workshop in CPS, San Bernardino, CA. 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Call SBS USA to register. Co-sponsors: Inland Empire Black Nurses Assn, NHTSA, Nissan North America, San Bernardino County Dept of Public Health

**\*12/3/03:** 8:30 am-5 pm, Gardena at Nissan North America. \$30 fee  
Sponsor: State Farm Insurance.  
6 CEUs for nurses

**\*12/4/03:** Technical Update & Refresher. 8:30 am-5 pm, Gardena at Nissan North America. \$30 fee.  
(Attendees may choose to come to both 12/3 & 12/4 for one fee of \$50.)

### SAFETY SEAT CHECKUPS

*Trained checkers are needed!  
Call SBS USA to register*

*Parents: Reserve at 310/222-6860*

**\*10/4/03:** 2:30 pm to 5 pm, San Bernardino, CA

**\*12/6/03:** 10 am - 2 pm. Location TBA

### Crashes under 15 MPH

Cathy Gotschall of NHTSA is collecting data on safety seats involved in collisions at 15 mph or less in which damage to the vehicles is primarily to the fenders or lights. Please relay queries and case information to [cgotschall@nhtsa.dot.gov](mailto:cgotschall@nhtsa.dot.gov).

## Comprehension Gap

Dr. Mark Wegner and Deborah Girasek, Uniformed Services, Univ. of the Health Sciences, studied the reading level of instructions for safety seats through 1999.

While 25% of U.S. adults read at 5th grade level and below and another 25% at 8th grade level, the average instruction manual is at the 10th grade level.

SBS USA has a low-reading level brochure in a number of languages but knows that the compromise is a reduction in the detailed explanations that can be included.

## New Products

**Britax Bodyguard** is a highback booster with a width-adjustable base for children 40-100 pounds. **Britax Wizard** is a convertible seat used rear facing for 5-33 pounds and forward facing up to 65 pounds. The headrest and harness can be moved up and down together to match the height of the child. Both Bodyguard and Wizard have built-in belt lock-offs and an adjustable headrest lined with energy-absorbing foam for side impact protection.

**Dorel-Cosco Alpha Omega Elite** can be used rear facing for 5-35 pounds, forward facing with 5-point harness up to 40 pounds, or as a belt-positioning booster for 30-100 pounds. Like the original Alpha Omega, the harness moves up and down with the adjustable headrest, but this model has a new locking mechanism and folding armrests.

**Evenflo Big Kid** is a booster with an adjustable, removable backrest for children 30-100 pounds.

**You can help SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. save children's lives with your membership or donation.**

GROUP SUBSCRIPTION:      \$500 Major Corp.      \$200 Hospital      \$100 Small Bus./Prof Grp      \$50 Community Org.  
 INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP: \$100 Contributing      \$50 Supporting      \$35 Basic  
 SPECIAL GIFT:              \$5,000 Benefactor      \$2,500 Patron      \$1,000 Sustaining      Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_ Org/Occup \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ City/State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail\* \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: Home (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ Work (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

I can help with \_\_\_\_\_

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

All memberships/subscriptions are thru 2004 and include *SafetyBeltSafe News*. Those at \$200 or more receive *Safe Ride News*.

**Check below** if you want to receive the following special subscriptions:

\$50 minimum: \_\_\_ Recall Update Service by e-mail \_\_\_ Recall Update Service by regular mail (if necessary)

\$100 minimum: \_\_\_ CPS Tech Update (online access to new instructions since 12/02)

*Special for \$100 members: Add \$25 to receive Safe Ride News thru 2004 & CD of CR Manufacturers' Instructions 1996-2002*

Payment: Check/Money Order (enclosed) \_\_\_\_\_ Credit Card (Visa or MC) # \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Exp \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

*SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. is a 501(c)(3) corporation*

Please mail this form to: *SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.*, Box 553, Altadena, CA 91003

*Federal Tax ID #95-3676040*

## Update on Aircraft and Children

Visit the Laws section of [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org) and download materials to take on flights with children in tow. The excellent Fact Sheet from *Safe Ride News* describes evacuation procedures with children as well as recommendations for normal transport aboard aircraft. FAA circulars and rules can be printed out to show to flight personnel.

As an aside, a message from those who serve the special needs community states that on planes with more than 19 seats a collapsible wheelchair *must* be aboard, should the need arise but that often personnel are not aware of it. Be persistent as it *is* there.

On the flip side, a recent traveler reports that on one flight, despite efforts to inform the flight attendants of the risks faced by a child sitting on a booster with a lap belt only, no action was taken although this is strictly prohibited by the FAA. On other trips, children sitting in belts have been forced to become lap held "because that is policy" and parents have been forced illegally to give up a safety seat, despite paying for a child's ticket.

Amy Malloy of Alaska is chairing an Ad Hoc Committee to address this issue; contact her at [amalloy@carseat.org](mailto:amalloy@carseat.org).

## Special Needs Product Gap

Snug Seat will stop producing child restraints. In July, they sold the last Spelcast made prior to 9-1-02, when the requirement for LATCH went into effect. They have had to turn down a large number of orders from parents and medical personnel who needed a seat for a child in a spica cast. Snug Seat has verbally received a temporary exemption from NHTSA. They hope to get written approval very soon so they can order parts and ship in December.

Britax is preparing to produce Traveller Plus and replacement models for Spelcast and SS 1000 for sale by Snug Seat. The Snug Seat Car Bed and Gorilla are available for now but will be discontinued.

In October, E-Z-ON Products will introduce the Ride-Ryte Booster for use with 86-Y Universal Harness (40-80 lbs.) or E-Z-ON Vest (age 2 and up). The Ride-Ryte may also be ordered with 1086-CamHarness (30-80 lbs.) for school buses. The E-Z-ON Modified Vest, which is used to transport children lying flat, now comes in sizes to fit children as small as 20 pounds and up to about age 12. Products by Snug Seat and E-Z-ON are available from Prevention Alternatives (517-927-7731 or [shinn@tcimet.net](mailto:shinn@tcimet.net)).

*SafetyBeltSafe* U.S.A.  
P.O. Box 553  
Altadena, California 91003

Return Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Van Nuys, CA  
Permit No. 987

*Avoid the holiday rush.  
Renew for 2004 today!*

*SafetyBeltSafe* News

September 2003

## Tools for the Technician

SBS USA features a variety of items to assist CPS advocates in offering accurate and effective help to the public. We partner with Member Safe Ride News Publications, source of the 2003 LATCH manual.

This final updated tome includes everything one might need to know about tethers and lower anchors. Couple it with the updated materials at [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org) that provide information on availability of retrofit shoulder belt kits, special add-on belts, and safety belt extenders on older vehicles.

The LATCH manual provides answers to the many questions surrounding this technology, as well as detailed tables for virtually every safety seat and vehicle manufacturer with part numbers, locations of hardware in vehicles, and availability of retrofit items. At SBS USA safety seat checkups and during Helpline calls, giving families the exact part number or informing them that there is no official part is a key method of empowering them to do it right.

For older vehicles, diagrams show what to do when there is no pre-drilled hole for a tether kit and no help from the local dealership or retailer. To order a copy, call 800/403-1424 or visit [www.saferidenews.com](http://www.saferidenews.com).

**THANK YOU - \$15,000** - State Farm Insurance Companies; **\$9000\*** - American Honda Motor Co.; **\$6000\*** - Health Net; **\$150** - Paul Schreiber, MD; **\$100** - Patty Basham, Carrie Carlson, Helen & Bert Fallon, Jenni's Family Food Store, Kathleen Larsen, Barbara Leach, Karen Tessier, RN, Union Co. Safe Communities Coalition, Elaine Weinstein  
*\*revised annual totals*

## ...from the Executive Director's desk

So, I'll admit it. I'm a fan. When I step outside my role as Executive Director, I still keep my advocate and technical consultant hats. Today, I tried out the new SBS USA Web Page to download the 34 new and revised sets of instructions for safety seats that have appeared since publication of our most recent collection through December 2002.

It was a thrill to see how easy it is to download them into my own folders so I can provide the most up-to-date information to both professionals and parents who approach SBS USA for aid.

Want access to this resource? If you are the SBS USA rep for an organization or have a personal membership for 2003 at the \$100 level or above, submit your request to [stombrello@carseat.org](mailto:stombrello@carseat.org) with the message New Web Page. Please include your name or Member Number. By return mail, you'll receive your password to use until December 31st.

Don't qualify? Renew or join on October 1<sup>st</sup> at the \$100 level or above and you'll receive access and other benefits until 12/31/04. Ask about special state level group memberships if you are the CPS Coordinator for your state.



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.