

SafetyBeltSafe News

Volume 25, No. 2



March 2004

Safety Seat Checkup Week, April 18-24

Parents and kids can enjoy a family outing at the **Petersen Automotive Museum** while ensuring their children's safety by attending **Safety Seat Checkup Day** on April 24. Coordinated by *SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.* with sponsorship by **Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A.**, safety seat checkups will be provided from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Museum parking lot at Fairfax and Wilshire in Los Angeles. Families participating in the checkup will be given discount coupons to visit the museum. At prior checkups, *SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.* checkers have found 90% of the seats checked needed adjustment.

The 11:30 a.m. press conference will report the kinds of errors caring parents make buckling up their children. Such mistakes affect if and how children survive collisions. According to the California Highway Patrol, more than 80% of the small children killed in car crashes would have survived if they had been properly buckled up. We invite those who have been saved in crashes by belts, seats, air bags, and helmets to attend to be recognized along with Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., whose gift of \$7500 is underwriting pre-event training and publicity about the Week. Remaining funds will keep the Helpline serving families across the nation.

Teams of nationally certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians and other trained volunteers will inspect each safety seat for proper fit for both the child and the vehicle. Sample seats on display help parents plan for new safety seats to meet recommendations. Older children will try the 5-Step Test for safety belt fit; at earlier such Tests, all under 10 needed boosters to pass. ”

Petersen Automotive Museum not only offers its site for the event but also has continued two *SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.* exhibits. The historical summary of CPS progress, now with special moveable cars representing an early Ford with a safety belt option; the Nissan Quest, an early family-friendly van; the new VW Beetle, a well received smaller car; and the Honda Odyssey, representing smart air bags ” and the other newest safety additions, is in the main lobby. The interactive

Boosters Are For Big Kids is on the 2nd floor, featuring a cut-down Toyota Camry where kids can try the 5-Step Test on any visit. Checkers and volunteers will have free admission to the museum on 4/24 before or after the event.

If you or your child want to wear a *SafetyBeltSafe* adult polo shirt (\$20, L or XL) or child s T-shirt (\$12, S 6-8 or L 14-16), order ahead to be mailed (we ll add shipping/hdlg) or pick up your shirt at the museum parking lot during the Checkup.

Call SBS USA to request posters —with the event (for the L A area) or without for placement anywhere you want to join in the celebration. (*Many thanks to ColorGraphics for the posters!*)

Special Enforcement Week, 4/11-17

During *Special Enforcement Week* (April 11-17), law enforcement officers will focus their efforts on writing tickets for people riding with babies on laps, children riding loose, and people of all ages riding in the back of pickup trucks. Special Enforcement Week is co-sponsored by Peace Officers Association of Los Angeles County and *SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.*

California law requires children to ride in a safety seat or booster until they are at least age 6 or weigh 60 lbs. However, most children need to use a safety booster seat until at least age 8 to lift them up so the shoulder and lap belts are properly positioned.

Citations *do* make a difference (*see pg 4*). Many thanks to the officers who make this a priority.

Tips for Techs

The importance of checking the instructions is becoming ever more clear as manufacturers make improvements that are changing standard recommendations and thus, the checkup forms for record-keeping.

For instance, most manufacturers have tested the center harness slots *or* added a 4th set that can be used instead of the top-most set for forward-facing. Because many old seats are still in circulation, we can't lose the warning. But before one jumps to move to a top set of harness slots, be *sure* to check the instructions.

A similar change has occurred for the "rule" that safety seats must be totally upright when forward-facing. Although that may be the ideal, it isn't the rule on many of the newer seats.

Did you know that tether brackets can be designed to swivel? Neither did the SBS USA team. But Toyota's retrofit bracket kit has that novel feature.

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.

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THANK YOU

\$4,500 American Honda Motor Co.,
year to date

\$2,500 Christine Ford

\$1,125 Car-safety.org

\$250 Anonymous

\$200 Driscoll Children's Hospital
Oakwood Health Care System
SAFE KIDS in Carroll Co.

Tarrant Co. SAFE KIDS/
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\$125: ACTS-Oregon; American
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Clemson Univ.; Clarkstown Police
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CPS Resource Center; Frederick Co.
SAFE KIDS; Terri Gilpatrick; Alicia
Hair; Hampton Health Distr.; Debe
Harman; Hinger Engineering; Janet
Holden, PhD; Humboldt Co Dept of
Pub Hlth/CPS; Cindy Humphry;

Injury Prevention Center; KS DOT
Safety Belt Education Office; Norm
Kellems; KY Transportation Cabinet-
Driver Safety; Tanya Klowden; Mary
La Kari; Lake Co. Dept of Public
Health; Jeannine Lange; Littleton
Fire, Rescue; Angelo Marquez;

Jennifer Matlock; MI Emergency
Nurses Care; Melissa Miles; Mill
Valley Police Dept; NV Office of
Traffic Safety; North Greece Fire
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Police; Southeast UT Health District;
Karen Tessier, RN; Tri-State SAFE
KIDS; UAMS/Ctr for Health
Promotion; Heather Watson; Will
Co. Sheriff's Office; Karen Williams,
RN; Cynthia Wright-Johnson; Yolo
Co. Health Dept.

CALENDAR

Special Enforcement Week

April 11 - 17, 2004

Safety Seat Checkup Week

April 18-24, 2004

sponsored by TMS, U.S.A.

Safety Seat Checkup Day

April 24, 2004

Petersen Automotive Museum, LA

CONFERENCE

***5/16-19:** Safety 'N Kids Traffic
Summit, Los Angeles. Sponsor:
CA Office of Traffic Safety.

www.safetynkids.org. 213/241-
2172

CALIFORNIA TRAINING

Nissan North America, Gardena

***4/8:** Educator Workshop, 8:30 am
- 5 pm sponsored by Toyota Motor
Sales, U.S.A. (TMS USA) An
overview of the technical and
program aspects of child passenger
safety (CPS) \$30 registration fee
includes CPS Reference Manual.

***4/15:** 9 am - 1 pm, Checker
Training, sponsored by TMS USA,
a short introduction to technical
aspects of CPS. (No fee required.)

CERTIFICATION TRAINING

*\$950 fee. Scholarships up to \$500
available. Call Cheryl Kim,
626/968-6555.*

***4/28-29 and 5/3-4:** Nissan North
America

SAFETY SEAT CHECKUPS

*Call SBS USA to register -
Checkers are needed! Parents:*

Register at 310/222-6860

Checkup: 10 am - 2 pm

(Checkers: 9 am - 3 pm)

***4/24:** Petersen Automotive
Museum, Los Angeles

***5/5:** Location TBA (mandatory
for certification class members)

Misuse Rates Misleading

In 2/04, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) issued a press release that asserted the misuse rate for child passengers is 73%, which is about 20% lower than the rates seen at the many safety seat checkups across the U.S.

The conclusions are based on data collected in fall 02 by CPS Techs looking for misuse features which did not require removal of the safety seat from the vehicle nor physical contact with the children but were deemed likely to generate injury.

The NHTSA press release headline, "Survey Finds Nearly 73 Percent of Child Restraints Misused," doesn't properly characterize the findings as data collection techniques omitted any misuse that couldn't be seen without removing the seat. Serious misuse thus escaped detection. Lumping the belt-positioning boosters in with the seats with internal harness systems also diluted the numbers.

Because previous studies of parental attitudes toward misuse have shown most had no clue about their errors in safety seat choice/use, announcing lower numbers as reflective of actual misuse rates can be deceiving since most believe that they are in the top 25%. Checkup participants often express surprise at their errors so there is probably little difference between them and the study sample.

However, if the data are not used to identify an actual misuse rate, there are many useful findings that can spark educational, engineering, and enforcement activities. By comparing the data on children under 60 lbs. with a similar study sample previously assessed (1996) by L. Decina et al, one finds an increasing trend to longer child restraint use. Only a 3% increase in restraint use overall was noted but it included a switch of about 21% from using safety belts only to safety seats. Teaching parents about boosters resulted in much of this improvement.

Non-use continues (11% overall) but primarily for the children over age 4. If drivers were restrained, 92% of children were buckled up; if not, restraint use dropped by 30%.

The front seat was home to fewer than 10% of the children observed; the back seat, the better seat message has been heard. Only 10% of the safety seats in use were used, a bit surprising since recycling safety seats is an enduring feature of most parental networks. Perhaps with kids in seats longer, more seats are too worn to be passed on readily.

More on the Shield Booster

Two writers have contributed information relating to shield boosters, the last of which is no longer being manufactured (SBS News, 1/04). In "Not All Child Safety Seats Are Created Equal: The Potential Dangers of Shield Booster Seats," (*Pediatrics*, 3/04), E. Edgerton, MD, Kelly Orzechowski, MPH, and M. Eichelberger, MD, report that significant reduction in protection occurs when 30-40 lb. children endure a crash in a shield booster rather than a safety seat with a full harness system. Building on previous reports of higher risk, the team analyzed 46 (16 in shield boosters) cases of children over a year restrained in these 2 types of systems and seen at National Children's Medical Center between 1991 and 2003.

Although the children in the shield boosters averaged a year older than the others and were more frequently sitting in the rear, this group was 8 times more likely to be seriously injured, 5 times more likely to go to intensive care, 4 times more likely to have head injuries, 29 times more likely to have chest injuries, and were the only ones to receive pelvic and abdominal injuries. Mean hospital costs for shield booster users were \$28,985 vs \$9,072 for the others.

The second writer is a paralegal, Ken Jarvis of Habush Habush and Rottier, S.C. in Wisconsin, who has worked on cases involving children injured while riding in shield boosters. About 80% of the cases of injury he reviewed showed ejection of children between 30 and 40 lbs. Although all but 1 shield booster model left the market by 1998, the cases continue.

Although Ken's focus is from the plaintiff side of legal cases, his concern about this type of product is related to the large number of these seats sold in second-hand stores. At least one company was selling 1 million a year new so the pool in the community can be extensive. Ken's concern has been great enough that he often bought all of the shield boosters in a second-hand store, only to see the shelves filled on his next visit. (Request the SBS USA form to document such issues.) He urges advocates to stress the need to keep children 30 to 40 lbs. in a product with a full harness.

Spring Break and Summer Vacation are on the way! Encourage your local media to focus stories on cps as families take to the roadways.

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

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

All memberships/subscriptions are for calendar year and include *SafetyBeltSafe News*.

\$200 or more automatically includes *Safe Ride News*.

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

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New Products

The **Special Tomato** by Bergeron is a new seat for special-needs children. One model fits children 20-80 lbs., and the other fits 80-150 lbs. It has a variety of positioning features, including a tray, footrest, and optional cushion cover for home use.

The **Mercedes Topsafe** is a convertible seat with a 3-point harness for rear-facing babies up to 30 lbs. Rear-facing features include an infant insert for babies up to 13 lbs, a rebound bar, and an Australian-style tether (attached to the rear of the car).

It has the Babysmart™ system, which shuts off the front passenger air bag in certain Mercedes vehicles. For children 20-40 pounds (18 months recommended), the seat may be used forward facing. The rebound bar is retracted, and the child is restrained by a padded shield instead of a harness.

NTSB HEARING

The Assn. of Flight Attendants (AFA) has been a stalwart backer of the use of safety seats on aircraft and of changing the regulatory acceptance of lap-held children under age 2. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has been a major government promoter of these two concepts for many years, although the regulatory agency in that area, the Federal Aviation Administration, has not taken such steps.

Suddenly, the NTSB has questioned keeping these goals as primary to their mission. AFA representative Chris Witkowski testified on behalf of retaining this as a priority, but as of press time, NTSB has not reached a final decision.

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. passed along the reminder that safety seats on the airplane are just a part of a whole trip which includes a good deal of ground travel in passenger vehicles.

5/15: Child Safety Day, nationwide, sponsored by State Farm Insurance; for locations, visit statefarm.com
 SBS USA needs checkers for sites in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. Call us to volunteer. 9 am to 1 pm for families; checkers needed 8 am to 2 pm.

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.
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Altadena, California 91003

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*Spring is a time for all things new.
ReNEW your membership today!*

SafetyBeltSafe News

March 2004

California Law Update

Introduced by Assemblyman Bill Maze, AB 2139 is considered cleanup legislation. The bill clarifies that fine money allocated to local health departments is to be used for a community child restraint program that includes education and helps economically disadvantaged families obtain low-cost child restraints. The bill also states that violators of V.C. Section 27360 or 27360.5 *must* attend a violator education program if the court reduces or waives the fine and *may* attend such a program voluntarily if the full fine is paid. A violator education program includes inspection of the child's safety seat and provides a certificate to be returned to the court.

SBS USA approached Assemblyman Maze about the need to clarify that city and county health departments are mandated to provide low-cost safety seats and education for the community, particularly those in financial need. Programs for violators can become self sufficient and reach more participants by charging a class fee. Those who need a new safety seat should meet the same eligibility criteria as others in the community.

Cheryl Kim, SBS USA Senior Program Consultant and developer of Family Safety in the Car, is working with the Violator Program Work Group of the California CPS Quality Task Force to provide consultation and guidelines for effective violator programs. Cheryl presented recommended provisions to improve state child restraint laws at Lifesavers 2004 in March. She will also make a presentation about the CA law in May at Safety N Kids Traffic Safety Summit in Los Angeles.

Citations Make a Difference

If you know SBS USA member **Traci Rebiejo** of Livermore (CA) PD, you can't miss her enthusiasm for and knowledge about CPS. A Technician-Instructor and active community program planner, Traci shares a tale that underlines why SBS USA promotes Special Enforcement Week, coming up April 11-17 this year.

On January 4, 1999, Traci's lieutenant assigned her to police the elementary school, due to many violations observed. Traci began looking at not only the pedestrian issues but also the unbelted students arriving at school. Soon, she heard complaints from a cited mom with an unrestrained 6 year old in front and a 4 year old lacking a safety seat in back. A month later, this mom visited both the school and PD to complain about the officer who cited her. No one backed down about the need to police near schools.

On April 28th, the mom contacted Officer Rebiejo to tell her that, despite her anger, she had complied with the law ever since her \$506 fine. It paid off. On April 27th en route to school, her vehicle was rear-ended at 30 mph by a vehicle that was totaled. She learned her lesson and was rewarded by the condition of her two children--totally uninjured. Now she wants to speak out about the importance of buckling up right on every ride. The local paper carried the story, and yet again, a citation has made a convert!

If your law enforcement agency decides to pursue *Special Enforcement Week 2004*, let us know for listing on our Scroll of Appreciation on 4/24. The Peace Officers Assn. of Los Angeles County sponsors this effort, and already individual departments are calling in their commitment to it.