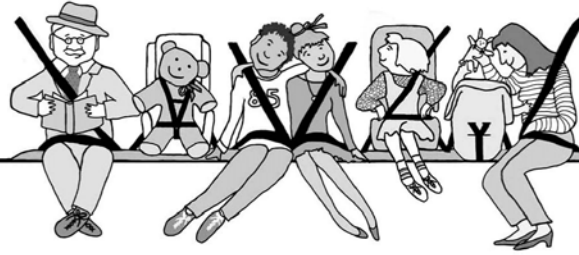


SafetyBeltSafe News

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September 2004

Where Should Children Sit?

Although enough children are placed in the front seat to generate laws in some states to require them to sit in back, there has been major movement since 1996 to reduce the automatic expectation that young children should sit there. Moreover, the data show more than a third of one's protection is lost by moving to the front seat.

Now there is tension between recommendations for parents and professionals. For more than 30 years, the center of the back seat has been the "best seat." However, since the dawn of LATCH equipment in vehicles and on safety seats, some manufacturers stress that LATCH "should" be used or "is preferred." A sound LATCH attachment may not only be easier to achieve but also, because engineers can design to the precise dimensions of the attachment points, may offer a performance edge for the safety seat.

NHTSA has been careful to report that LATCH is a convenience feature, but the conflict leaves parents and professionals agonizing over the choices to make.

An interesting proposal has come from authors of a research paper, "Children in Side-Impact Crashes: Seating Positions and Injury Mechanisms" by Andrew Howard, MD *et al.* (Journal of Trauma, 6/04).

After studying cases in a Canadian trauma hospital and reviewing data from FARS and NASS, 2 U.S. federal databases on car crash outcomes, the authors suggest that seating position contributes more than restraint use *alone* in sustaining a serious or fatal injury. Even without intrusion, children sitting on the impact side during a crash had the highest rate of severe injuries generated from contact with the vehicle interior. However, restraint use improves outcomes for children in the center, by reducing the likelihood of being thrown into danger on impact.

The authors recommend vehicle improvements that would lend additional protection. They suggest innovative locations for the new LATCH hardware so 2 children might be seated away from the sides of the vehicle. For instance, LATCH bars might be inset so that they do not line up exactly with belt locations. When a full car is anticipated, belts could be used. However, since in most cases, the car is not full, lower risk locations could be chosen in many cases.

Further evidence of the benefits of combining center location and better restraint choices are found in a report from the Partners for Child Passenger Safety, carried in the 2004 Annual Proceedings of the Assn for the Advancement of Automotive Medicine. Kristi Arbogast *et al.* found an 81% injury reduction for youngsters belted in the center with shoulder-lap belts over lap belts alone.

However, the data show that the choice of the center location is influenced by the presence of a shoulder-lap belt *only* when a single child is riding in the vehicle. This seems to indicate that the CPS community needs to stress the recommendation of the least-well-protected child riding in the most protected spot in the car. More parents would be likely to place their booster-age children in the center if they realized that their rear-facing child is more protected than the forward-facing child. Evidence that rear facing improves protection in both frontal and side impacts, in tandem with the data reported above, is compelling.

Editor's Note: This summer, my 18-year-old niece experienced a severe broadside impact to the driver's door, perpetrated by a speeding, red-light-running, uninsured driver. Although she and her seat were shoved nearly to the passenger side and the Jaws of Life had to be used, her injuries were scrapes and sore muscles. I'm cheering for the Toyota Prius side impact air bags. KM

Product Updates

Baby Trend has two infant-only seats with detachable, adjustable base. The Latch-Loc has rigid LATCH connectors; the Flex-Loc has connectors on straps. Both have a fixed-back version to fit babies 5 to 20 lbs. and adjustable-back version (up to 22 lbs.) Either may have a 5-pt harness or a 3-pt harness with pad.

Combi USA acquired Car Seat Specialty in 4/04. Some CSS models will be made by Combi, using the same or different names. Convertibles have a 5-pt harness and belt lockoffs and are certified for 5 to 40 lbs, 30 lbs. rear facing. Boosters are certified for 33 to 100 lbs. Combi will replace the CSS Airway with the Acadia, a combination seat with harness certified up to 50 lbs. (See detailed listing below.)

Dorel has new convertible/combo seats certified for 5 to 35 lbs. rear facing and up to 40 lbs. with the harness. The Safety 1st Enspira & Eddie Bauer Deluxe Convertible, two versions of the same seat, with 5-pt harness or tray-shield options, convert to booster mode up to 80 lbs. without the harness. The Safety 1st Intera has a detachable base, optional when the seat is used with the harness, but mandatorily removed for backless or highback booster use up to 100 lbs. The Safety 1st High Rider, a booster with removable back and adjustable headrest, and the Cosco Highrise or Ambassador, two backless boosters, fit children between 30 and 100 lbs.

Evenflo Traditions is a new combination seat similar to the Chase. The **Mercedes Kid** is a booster with removable back and adjustable headrest for 33 to 80 lbs. **Graco** discontinued the Century STE series and Room-To-Grow. **Triple Play Products** now produces the Sit'n'Stroll from Safeline Kids, which has left the field.

Manufacturer	Model	Previous Model Name	Type
Combi	Apogee		Booster with removable back, adjustable headrest
Combi	Avatar		Convertible
Combi	Everest	was CSS-Nania Ola	Backless booster
Combi	Tyro		Infant-only, 22 lbs. or less; detachable base
Combi	Victoria		Convertible
Combi	Yorktown		Booster with removable back, adjustable headrest
Combi-Nania	Baby One	was CSS-Nania Baby One	Infant-only, 20 lbs. or less; no separate base
Combi-Nania	Polo	was CSS-Nania Polo	Backless booster
Combi-Strolee	HighRide	was CSS-Safety Baby HighRide	Backless booster
Combi-Strolee	McKinley	was CSS Uno	Backless booster
Combi-Strolee	Saratoga	CSS Dreamer	Booster with removable back, adjustable headrest

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THANK YOU

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- \$750 Anonymous (to date)
- \$250 CA Dept of Health Services
- \$200 Derek Whitefield
- \$125 Camarillo Police Dept.
- KS Parents As Teachers
- N. Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District
- Safety Council, LA Capitol Area
- Santa Barbara County Public Health Department
- Union Colony Fire Rescue Authority
- \$100 Kathleen Larsen

2004 Color Pictorial

Photos of the latest safety seats have been added to the revised SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. Color Pictorial.

This essential tool for checkups and fitting stations helps Technicians identify the model name, which is often not found anywhere on the seat.

It is necessary to know the model name to look up the correct instructions and find out if the product has recalls. \$50 each plus \$5 shipping/handling (Order #50).

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Collaboration Helps!

For SAFETEA

Kids and Cars reached out to colleagues in the CPS field and on 9/8/04, by e-mail, SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. shared a letter from Executive Director Stephanie Tombrello concerning contents of the sprawling bill to reauthorize NHTSA programs. The information went to extensive e-mail lists of SBS USA and the CPSPListserve with more than 1000 subscribers.

Currently, 2 versions of S. 1072 are going to conference committee. Omitted by the House, the U.S. Senate bill has child-related provisions -- collecting data about non-traffic, non-crash incidents, such as backover and power-window injuries; investigating technologies to prevent these tragedies; & issuing standards for child-safe power windows.

The last issue just has been addressed (see article at right), but to weigh in on the other aspects, go to www.carseat.org to reach the SAFETEA Transportation Bill Conference Committee.

CALENDAR

CONFERENCE: 3/13-15/05: Lifesavers 2005

SAFETY SEAT CHECKUP: 4/16/05: Safety Seat Checkup Day at Petersen Automotive Museum, LA

Success for Regulating Vehicle Power Windows

In the November '03 issue, SBS News reported the Kids and Cars campaign to clarify the patterns behind child deaths related to cars *not* in crashes and to enact changes to counter these risks.

On 9/13/04, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Administrator Jeffrey Runge, MD announced that by 10/01/08, all vehicles with power windows, sold in the U.S., must include a system for activation resistant to children's mistakes.

Rocking toggle switches will no longer be permitted. Instead, a switch that is flush with the armrest and requires the user to lift up should make it unlikely in the future that a child would strangle. At least 23 children have died in power window-related incidents since 1993.

Join for 2005!

All renewals and new memberships received from 10/01/04 will provide member services through 12/2005. Your membership is a critical component of the resources to keep SBS USA services available for both professionals and the public. Don't forget—2005 is our 25th Anniversary Year!

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It's time to start thinking "Renewal!"

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Kids in Aircraft

Since 1982, SBS USA has proposed appropriate restraint use for all children aboard airplanes, because 1) a child under 2 weighs more than a Styrofoam cup, not allowed in hand for take off and landing; 2) a child in arms is unsafe during turbulence and emergency aircraft maneuvers; 3) young children do not receive equal protection under current FAA regulations; 4) "flying" children pose an undue risk to others in the cabin; and 5) on trips, a damaged or lost safety seat is less likely if the child is using it in the cabin. The FAA almost protected the under 2's in 1998, due to the White House Commission on Aircraft Safety and Security. Yet the continuing response from FAA has been that families will drive, not fly, if the youngest members have to pay for plane seats, subjecting children to increased risk of death.

For the 8/04 hearing, National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) staff produced excellent data on which to challenge old thinking. Despite common belief, data show that between 1983 and 2000, more than 95% of occupants in commercial aircraft emergencies survived. Economic impacts from requiring the under 2's to have proper protection don't have to preclude family travel. For '03, aircraft loads averaged 73%, and only 20 passengers per 10,000 were "bumped." Under 2's are only 1% of aircraft loads; thus even if they flew free, rarely would they "bump" others. Most safety seats meet aircraft requirements; backless boosters can ride in carry-ons. Past FAA reports insist increased costs lead families to desert plane travel for the car, increasing child deaths. But assessing historical data, NTSB staff questioned that link. From 1980-2002, the pattern of vehicle miles traveled and aircraft passenger numbers have been roughly parallel, but 3 dips in aircraft numbers occurred in 1981 (aircraft controller strike), 1991 (Persian Gulf War), and '01-'02 (9/11 terrorist attacks & sequelae).

Looking at passenger vehicles, the NTSB staff found a 3.5% DECREASE in deaths between '80 & '81; a 5.9% decrease, '91 to '92; & a .6% decrease, '00 & '01. The last dip actually lasted longer, '00 to '02, & had 8.3% fewer plane boardings *and* a 4% increase in vehicle miles traveled. Looking at all passenger vehicle fatalities from '00 to '02, there was a 1% increase, *but* for children under 5, deaths on the road decreased 12.4%, injuries, 11.9%. This coincided with an increase of 400,000 children in the U.S. population, bringing the deaths per 100,00 children down to 2.4 from 2.8 and for injuries, from 349 injuries to 301.

As NTSB staff concluded, "In fact, despite the acknowledged difference in relative risk between road and commercial airline travel in the United States, and the largest diversion from air travel in U.S. history during recent years, road fatalities and injuries for children under 5 years old have continued to decrease."

RECALL: Britax has issued a recall for Husky, Marathon, and Wizard and for Snug Seat Traveller Plus (made by Britax). In all models made through 7/23/04, the adjustment strap may slip, allowing the harness to loosen. A replacement strap with a thicker weave has been sent to registered owners. For more details, go to www.britaxusa.com/ > Customer Support > Recalls or telephone 800/683-2045.