

SafetyBeltSafe News

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Consumers Union Shakes Up the Safety Seat Community LATCH Performance for a Few Safety Seats Sounds an Alert

Consumers Union (CU) has a long history of testing safety seats and thus, contributing to improved standards and performance. Concurrently, some findings have been controversial, and some past recommendations, inadvertently, have led to parents purchasing safety seats they could not use correctly. As with any finding, the data collection technique is important in understanding the outcome.

The May 2005 issue of *Consumer Reports* raises questions about the performance of several safety seats when tested in the LATCH mode.

The testing conducted by CU varied in some aspects from the ordinary federal compliance testing now in place. The problems stemmed from tests in the rear-facing mode, the position which SBS USA and American Academy of Pediatrics, among others, recommend for as long as possible now that many safety seats are certified to 30 lbs. or more.

Moreover, the test rig was more comparable to the slope of current vehicle seats, a change that will go into effect in 8/05 under FMVSS 213.

Two Combi models ran afoul of the tests. With a 30-lb. dummy, the convertible Combi Avatar, attached rear-facing with LATCH, came off the test rig at 28.9 mph when the LATCH attachment strap was cut. Similar problems showed up in two additional tests so the Avatar was listed Not Acceptable by CU. Company representatives expressed shock and subsequently issued a recall. (See pg. 2.) The Combi Tyro infant-only seat tilted too far back when crash-tested with a 22-lb. dummy, representing the heaviest baby certified for the product.

In CU tests, two other products did not perform as expected with LATCH. The Evenflo Portabout 5, holding a 22-lb. dummy, detached from its base in two crash tests at 30.4 mph, just above the federal test standard. Evenflo released a letter stating that 145 tests of the product never showed the shell releasing from the base. Word from Britax about the Marathon over-rotating with the 33-lb., weighted dummy has been limited. CU noted that the safety belt path is different from the bars for the LATCH attachments which could affect its performance.

CU lists only 17 models, 8 infant-only and 9 convertibles, of the many on the market. The article lists categories and ratings as well as naming a few as "top performers." Only one, the Evenflo Titan 5, was selected as a CU "Best Buy." However, as always, it is critical that safety seat selection is conducted with the best fit in the vehicle, best fit for the child, and best fit with parental usage in mind.

SBS USA recognizes that the CU findings provoke discussion and that the companies will be exploring the differences between their tests and those reported in the article. Nevertheless, the warnings are included on the SBS USA Recall/Replacement Parts List so that parents can be made aware of the information to decide how best to transport their children.

Note: A correction in the June issue reads: *"In the May issue, a ratings chart for convertible car seats was incorrect. The chart showed that for crash protection, some seats in the front-facing toddler mode performed more poorly with the car's safety belts than with LATCH connectors. Our tests have shown that they perform as well."*

THANK YOU

- \$6,750 American Honda (2005 membership year)
- \$3,000 Christine Ford
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- \$500 Aprica Kassai, Inc.
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- \$354 Commercial Capital Bank
- \$250 Douthit Frets Rouse Gentile & Rhodes LLC
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- \$225 Derek Whitefield
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Public Health Dept
Sonoma County Dept of
Health Services
- \$160 Long Beach Health & Human
Services
Pleasanton Police Dept
- \$144 Julie Gregory
- \$135 Health Services Agency

New Products

Britax Baby Safe is an infant-only seat for 4-to-22-lb. babies with a 5-point harness, detachable base with an anti-rebound bar, and belt lock-offs. It has an adjustable "foot prop" that contacts the floor of the vehicle, rigid LATCH connectors, and vehicle belt installation spacers.

Britax Boulevard is a convertible seat for children 5-65 lbs., rear facing up to 33 lbs. Similar to the Wizard, it has three crotch strap positions, lock-offs, a tether for forward- or rear-facing use, and click-in LATCH connectors.

Combi Connection is an infant-only seat for babies under 22 lbs. It has an adjustable, detachable base and click-in LATCH connectors. The carry handle stays up during travel. A separate base with a rear tether strap is now available for the Combi Tyro. (See pg. 1.)

The **Dorel-Cosco Scenera** is a convertible seat with a 5-point harness for 5-to-40 lb. children, up to 35 lbs. rear facing. It features four sets of shoulder harness slots, its major difference from the long-available Touriva. The new Cosco Dream Ride SE can be used only as a side-facing car bed. *SBS News*, 3/05, carried Dorel's recall, advising not to use the rear-facing position for Dream Rides made 12/1/03-4/28/04.

Dorel-Safety 1st Apex 65 is a combination seat with an adjustable headrest. The harness adjusts in the front and may be used from 22 to 65 lbs. The seat may be used as a booster from 40 to 100 lbs.

Evenflo Orion is a convertible seat for children 5-40 lbs., up to 30 lbs. rear facing. It has a 5-point harness with adjustment knobs on both sides of the seat and two crotch strap positions.

CALENDAR

CONFERENCES

***8/4-6: Kidz In Motion**, Orlando, FL. email: kimconf@hiwaay.net
Stephanie Tombrello and Cheryl Kim, SBS USA staff, will present "Educational Outreach for Booster Kids" and "Improving the Effectiveness of Your CPS Law."

Call SBS USA for information about Checkups and Workshops

SAFETY SEAT CHECKUPS

***8/31 & 9/21:** 10 am - 2 pm.
(Checkers needed 9 am - 3 pm)
Locations TBA

EDUCATOR WORKSHOP

6 CEUs for nurses
***8/30:** Presbyterian Intercommunity Hospital, Whittier, CA. Co-sponsors - Whittier PD and CA Office of Traffic Safety. 8:30 am - 5 pm. No class fee.

Contact ckim@carseat.org for Certification Courses.

CERTIFICATION TRAINING

***9/15-16 & 19-20:** Nissan North America, Gardena, CA \$950 fee. Scholarships available up to \$500. (See required checkup, 9/21.)

CERTIFICATION RENEWAL

***9/14:** Nissan North America, Gardena, CA, 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. \$50 class fee, plus \$75 to National Safe Kids. (See box, pg. 4.)

RECALL

Combi has recalled Avatar convertible seats made 11/12/03 to 5/7/04. The LATCH strap, when used to install the seat rear facing, could be severed in a crash. Call 800/992-6624 to order a repair kit. Until the seat is repaired, use the vehicle belt for rear-facing installation.

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Safety Seat Checkup Day—“Land Office Business”!

Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles was the scene of a lively event on April 16th when 56 families with 71 safety seats were assisted with assessments of the way their children were traveling. Teams of 3 provided evaluations of errors (91% incorrect use) and new ideas for parents about where to place their children in cars and how to recognize potential loose missiles that might injure occupants in a crash or sudden stop.

Only half of the 62 children were present, and 22 of the families were expecting. Families attended from 9 L.A. County cities (25 different zip codes in L.A. alone), and 2 unincorporated areas. Orange County, CA and even Coral Gables, FL, had representatives!

Thirty-three team members from Ventura, Orange, San Bernardino, and Los Angeles Counties represented 17 organizations. Many families were referred by the Internet, health care settings, **Dydee Diaper Service**, and law enforcement agencies. Volunteer support was provided by **Civil Air Patrol cadets** from Van Nuys, **AmeriCorps/AltaMed**, and **LACES**, a local school program.

Special recognition went to three of the six supervisors, LAPD officers **Pat Beighley**, **Norm**

Kellems, and **John Nisbet**, for years of dedicated service in training and checkup events, and to the **CHP and Peace Officers Assn of L.A. County** which have supported Special Enforcement Week for many years. **Toyota** provided a checker team and a Sienna for demonstration of safety seat installation. **Bucklebear** visited the children, delighting some who could barely take their eyes from his friendly face. The children received a special **Bucklebear Good Passenger** activity book, courtesy of **Weiner-Seaman Productions**.

The event also provided a good opportunity for re-certifying CPS (child passenger safety) Technicians to hone their skills and for those new to the field to learn more to provide better education in their communities. Pre-event training and orientation sessions provided access to the latest updates in the CPS field.

Thanks to all of those who volunteered, provided volunteer sustenance, and to **Toyota** for underwriting the publicity and event costs. Outreach to every CA county and each city in Los Angeles County stimulated Proclamations of the Week and raised awareness of this issue which still lacks sufficient attention.

KCAL-TV covered the event as did **Korea Times** while announcements on radio and in a variety of printed sources brought families to have their safety seats checked.

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May 2005

Happy Anniversary!

West Coast: SBS USA Board members and staff extend appreciation to supporters of the 25th Anniversary Brunch, held at Petersen Automotive Museum on 3/5. All were pleased to have Ed Bradley, representing sponsor Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., and Los Angeles City Council member Wendy Greuel contribute encouraging remarks. Ms. Greuel brought her preschooler and husband along as well. Los Angeles Council member Martin Ludlow sent special recognition of our 25 years of service. Most moving was the heartfelt talk by Marc Cohen, Board member, who explained the tragic loss of his stepdaughter and grandson in a crash. The event propelled him to become a CPS Technician and to volunteer to prevent others from the searing experience of such a loss.

Along with new members and supporters of SBS USA, we welcomed three members of the Advisory Board who have been engaged in this campaign since the 1970s—Ellen and Harvey Knell and Robert Vinetz, MD. Paul and Suzy Kim of Safe Traffic System, Inc. came the farthest—from Chicago!

The morning featured displays from the past, including a DVD of photos from SBS USA history, and a series of Silent Auction and raffle opportunities

along with brunch. Thanks to all of the donors and supporters who made the day memorable.

East Coast: Besides displaying our new 25th Anniversary banner at the exhibit booth at Lifesavers, SBS USA members and friends enjoyed a get-together at the Anniversary Social on 3/14 in Charlotte, NC, thanks to sponsor Nissan North America. With good food and the chance to mingle with advocates from 29 states, Washington, DC, and Japan, we were pleased to welcome Alex Cardinali of Nissan and Beth Mallard of Edelman who helped make the event possible.

Although she shrinks from recognition, we were proud to introduce Annemarie Shelness, who pioneered work in CPS in the 1960s and has recently produced *Don't Risk Your Child's Life VII*, the highly recommended educational video used for both parents and professionals. Annemarie resides in Winston-Salem, NC, but not everyone in her vicinity knows she is there. As an ongoing mentor in the field, her value cannot be over-emphasized.

As we enjoy this special Anniversary Year, we have been touched to receive special gifts from long-standing members. We hope you will consider how you can contribute to continuing our mission.

SBS USA will hold a 1-day Certification Renewal Course on 9/14 at Nissan North America in Gardena. National Safe Kids developed the new program for Techs who are active in child passenger safety (CPS) but have allowed their Certification to lapse. The class includes a brief review in the classroom and skills testing in the afternoon. After successfully completing the course, participants must take the Safe Kids online exam. Class fees are \$50 to SBS USA plus \$75 to Safe Kids. For more information on the program, go to www.safekids.org. To apply for the September 14 class, e-mail ckim@carseat.org.