

SafetyBeltSafe News

Volume 26, No. 4

July 2005



Turmoil from the Press

Child passenger safety (CPS) advocates promote the greatest safety for kids but find widely publicized materials that undermine their work very frustrating.

The Los Angeles Times (6/27/05) covered the long commutes families often make to the “right school,” featuring a photo of 3 kids, 2 clearly riding at risk. *SafetyBeltSafe* U.S.A. approached the paper, offering to inform to the family of their risk, without response.

More troubling was the 7/10/05 *New York Times Magazine* article, “The Seat-Belt Solution” by Stephen Dubner & Steven Levitt, who contend, for children 3 and older, that safety belts prevent more deaths more cheaply than safety seats. Money saved by U.S. parents could be invested in “built-in safety seats” and belts that “vertically adjust” to fit children. Findings in 2 matched crash-tests, using 3- & 6-year-old dummies riding in shoulder-lap belts and in properly installed safety seats, were labeled as support although “the sensors didn’t measure neck or abdominal injuries.” Their data were drawn from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System, a national compilation of fatal-crash reports.

Responses abounded, from emergency and medical professionals; from advocates and parents; and from researchers, especially those engaged in the State Farm Insurance-funded Partners study, based at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP).

CHOP results, using the largest database of real-world crashes involving children, show injuries reduced by 71% for 1-to-4-year olds in safety seats and 59% for booster kids. A current study by C A Muszynski *et al* in *Journal of Neurosurgery*, 5/05, shows reductions in head injury for *all* correctly restrained children with greater positive effects on the youngest ones. An earlier study by Carden Johnston, MD *et al* found death rates for *restrained* kids of all ages were similar, but injury rates for the

over-4-year-olds were higher than for their younger counterparts. Being buckled up at all made the difference in fatal crashes which often involve higher speeds, side impacts, unusual circumstances, etc. Injuries were more common when children were not using the optimal restraint system by age. During the data period examined, most over-4-year-olds would have been in poorly fitted belts.

Other issues were glossed over in the Dubner/Levitt article. An excellent video of children in safety belts riding in back, captured their contortions in the back seat as their parents, unaware, focused on the road. Never out of their belts, the children slouched, wiggled onto their sides, faced the rear window, tucked the shoulder belts under their arms, etc. One reason children do better in boosters is that, especially with a locked, switchable-retractor safety belt, squirming is limited, keeping the belts where they belong, increasing comfort, and reducing risk from misplaced lap belts.

The authors returned repeatedly to the enormous incorrect use rate of 80%. However, that rate is generated by the 3 and under children; incorrect use for older children is primarily not using a booster without passing the 5-Step Test for belt fit. Misuse of boosters, except when kids too young are moved into them, is rare. The \$200 price tag quoted by the authors is not required for a booster.

On July 21, Dubner was interviewed on the NBC Today Show where he admitted *his* 2 kids ride in safety seats, and his interviewer stressed that laws in 50 states require young kids to be in safety seats, with 33 covering older kids, too. At press time, the CHOP team expects to rebut the *N Y Times* article.

CALENDAR

August Checkup and Workshop co-sponsored by Whittier PD and CA Office of Traffic Safety. Call SBS USA to make reservations.

SAFETY SEAT CHECKUPS

(Checkers needed 9 am - 3 pm)

*8/31: 10 am - 2 pm. The Quad at Whittier, CA. In parking structure behind Burlington Coat Factory.

*9/21: 10 am - 2 pm. Location TBA

EDUCATOR WORKSHOP

6 CEUs for nurses

*8/30: Presbyterian Intercommunity Hospital, Whittier, CA. 8:30 am - 5 pm. No 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, \$75 to SAFE KIDS USA.

THANK YOU

\$8,250 American Honda (2005 membership year)
\$225 AR Children's Hospital
\$200 The Children's Hospital of Denver
\$125 Baton Rouge Clinic, AMC Benton County Car Seat Team Boston Public Health Commission Child Care Links Children's Hospital of Orange Co. Children's Wonderland Clarkstown Police Department Lucie Drum Exeter Police Department Karen Fond, PNP Tamara Garcia Marti Garrido-Young Goodman Lister & Peters PC Health Care Agency-Orange/Buckle Up Orange Co. Hinger Engineering Janet Holden Kern County Health Department Jeannine Lange Livonia Fire Department Long Beach Health & Human Serv. Mercy Medical Center MI Dept of Community Health Mill Valley Police Department Monroe Co. Hospital & Foundation New Haven Health Department Oak Valley Hospital, Family Support Network Donna Ott, MS, PT Park City Fire Department PeaceHealth Medical Group Lisa Reints Ristal Engineering Safe Communities Center, College of So MD Safety Restraint Coalition St Mary Mercy Hospital Scottsdale Healthcare Sierra Vista Fire Department Karen Tessier, RN Tuscarawas Co General Health District UT Department of Public Safety/Hwy Safety Valley Oak Children's Services Yolo Co. Health Dept

NEW RESOURCES

Due next month are **The Perfect Gift** brochure, 26th edition, covering CPS for kids from birth on in English or Spanish, and a revised **Safety Belt Roulette** brochure aimed at belt-only-age kids and adults. Choose between DVD or VHS video format for "Boosters Are For Big Kids," available separately or as part of the curriculum kit.

Have you seen **GOING PLACES with Bucklebear**, the interactive CD? SBS USA "tested" it with 3 year olds who liked choosing among various cars, types of safety seat, locations in the car, and "destinations," a special new word they learn. For this and other great CPS resources, visit Weiner-Seaman Productions at www.bucklebear.com.

RECALLS

For some infant-only seats made 8/19/03 to 10/20/04, strap ends can slip through adjusters, causing loosening of harness. Recall applies to **Cosco** or **Safety 1st Designer 22** (22-300, 22-325) and **Eddie Bauer Deluxe Infant** (22-625). Call (800) 881-0570 for clips to attach to harness strap ends.

Britax Super Elite models made 4/1/01 - 8/31/02: the harness release lever may stick, allowing adjuster strap to slip and harness to loosen. Call 800/683-2045 for adjuster strap guide. Push release lever down to make sure it is locked before each use until repaired.

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.
 Office: 1124 W. Carson St.
 LA BioMed,
 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
 Web site: www.carseat.org
 Mail: Box 553
 Altadena, CA 91003
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
 Stephanie M. Tombrello, L.C.S.W.
NEWSLETTER EDITOR:
 Kellie L. Mzik

Go to www.carseat.org to order CPS materials for your child's classroom before school starts!

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 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:

\$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 December, 2003)

*Special for \$100 members: Add \$25 and receive Safe Ride News through
2005 & latest CD of safety seat manufacturers' instructions!*

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

New Warning for Parents—and Professionals

A surprising report of the near-strangulation of a safety-seat-using 3 year old prompted a query from *Sacramento Bee* writer Deb Kollars to SBS USA. Daughter of a nurse and retired CA Highway Patrol officer, the child had reached for the shoulder belt, unused because the safety seat was installed with LATCH, winding it around her neck. A scream from the back seat alerted her mother who realized that the belt was tightening because its switchable retractor had been activated by the youngster. Fortunately, releasing the child's ponytail made enough room to get the belt over her head.

Although SBS USA Executive Director Stephanie Tombrello was unaware of prior examples, MD child safety advocate Joseph Collela quickly shared previous incidents he had forwarded to industry leaders to consider. With the advent of mandatory center shoulder-lap belts, Collela noted kids might reach adjacent belts as well.

Awareness of the risk can forearm families. Note if a shoulder-lap belt is within reach of a toddler who might experiment with it, trying to emulate parents or older siblings. If so, consider buckling the belt and if it can be locked with a switchable retractor, do so. When the belt is one that is unused due to LATCH attachment, put the belt behind, not through, the safety seat in the locked mode.

Request or download "New Warning for Parents," form #646, available in English and Spanish, from SBS USA/www.carseat.org.

Nissan North America Comes Through

Faced with more than 70 new and revised sets to update the CD of Manufacturers' Instructions from 12/03 and no government support for the work, SBS USA turned to Nissan North America for help.

With welcome news from Terri Hines, Corporate Contributions, our team is tackling new and updated summaries on all safety seats from '96-7/05 and can keep costs to users at only \$10 per single copy. Already some larger entities are putting in bulk orders so, thank Nissan North America and call *SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.* to reserve your copy.

Another kind of resource for which Nissan is renewing support is scholarships to reduce costs for volunteers and non-profit agency representatives for SBS USA Certification Training fees. Applicants who commit to assisting SBS USA with community events for 2 years are eligible for up to a \$500 scholarship to offset fees. Call Cheryl Kim at 626/968-6555.

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

***Check your membership.
Is yours up to date?***

SafetyBeltSafe News

July 2005

How Long is the Back Seat Safer?

The professional journal *Pediatrics* published two peer-reviewed papers that included seating location in their investigations. In 3/05, it carried the study by Dr. Dennis Durbin *et al*, from the Partners in CPS team at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, of the relative importance of seating row and appropriate restraint use, based on age, in reducing children's injuries in vehicle collisions. The 6/05 issue included research by Drs. Craig Newgard & Roger Lewis, seeking a definitive age/size when a child could expect to avoid serious injury from an air bag.

The Partners source was a 15-state, State Farm Insurance client-database involved in crashes with their children between 12/98 and 11/02. Appropriate restraint was safety seat or booster through age 8 and shoulder-lap belt for ages 9-15. For children through age 12, use of an *inappropriate* restraint increased injury risk twofold, while moving to the front seat increased the risk by 40%. Although teens 13-15 using shoulder-lap belts showed no difference by seating row, inappropriately restrained teens (e.g., lap belt only) showed a threefold jump in risk in the front compared to those in the rear. In summary, the focus on restraint type by age is key, but "considerable added benefit" would ensue if kids also were kept in back by law, which has been the case in many European countries for years and more recently for some ages in 20 U.S. states.

The Newgard research examined the National Automobile Sampling System Crashworthiness Data System database for children to age 18 in the right front seat when involved in a crash from 1995-2002. Reviewing the 67% of crashes that were frontal, the authors found children 0-14 at increased risk of

injury from the air bag, but there was a mitigating effect on injury risk from air bag deployment after age 14. This held even when newer vehicles with less "aggressive" air bags and more safety features were looked at separately.

The two studies appear to support different recommendations for rear seating of children, but different data sets of different source and magnitude were used. The Durbin paper looked at front vs. rear seating, while the other paper looked only at passengers in front. Why is age 15 better for CPS advocates to advance, or conversely, why does a difference of 2 years for teens matter? Data show the percentage of 13-14 year-olds in the front seat has remained static since 1997, while younger kids have moved to the back. Other studies show, in general, riding in back is safer long into the adult years.

SBS USA recommends that children remain in back until they start learning to drive, avoiding the more dangerous right-front seat, closer to both frontal- and side-impact crash involvement. From parents nationally, we hear of pressure to reduce protection for kids at each recommended age choice-point. However, equipment changes have made riding rear-facing to 18-24 months more feasible and acceptable. The wide range of boosters, their comfort, and the consistent message about the 59% injury reduction their use secures is reflected in 33 states that require child restraints beyond age 4, increasing protection for children up to ages 8-10. Age 15 seems another appropriate pivotal point, since it fits with preparation for driving and will counteract the pressure on parents to give elementary school kids the now-coveted spot in what the older generation called the "suicide seat."