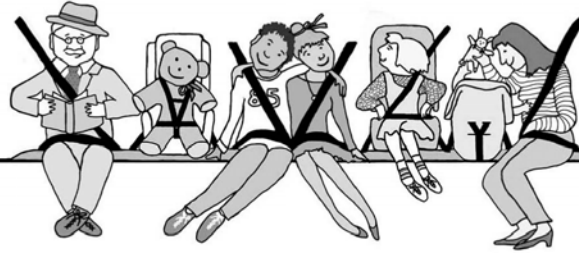


SafetyBeltSafe News

Volume 27, No. 2



March 2006

Safety Seat Checkup Week April 23- 29, 2006

Thanks to steadfast supporters **Petersen Automotive Museum** and **Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A.**, Safety Seat Checkup Day is scheduled for April 29, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Families and advocates alike are anticipating a busy day of safety seat checks, re-certification reviews, and tours of the varied exhibits at the museum. The Petersen Museum offers reduced-cost entry for families whose seats are checked and free admission for checkers and volunteers for the day.

This year *SafetyBeltSafe* U.S.A. plans to focus on the good news of the February 16th introduction of AB 2108 to the CA legislature. We'll be honoring Assembly Member **Noreen Evans** at the 11:30 a.m. press conference at the museum in Los Angeles. Since use of boosters for kids from age 4 until at least age 8 has been shown to reduce injuries by 59%, the revised law, if approved, will contribute greatly to reducing unnecessary pain and long term consequences to kids, their families, and society.

From now through April 28, SBS USA will take reservations for checkup appointments and invites checkers to register to help on the teams of three who provide the free evaluations for families. Pediatrician **Michael Sachs** has offered a free lunch for volunteers. Checkers should arrive at 9 a.m. and stay until 3 p.m., and volunteers to help set up and clean up are welcome from 8 a.m. on.

Posters and flyers are available for anyone to distribute. Proclamations will be sent to the Board of Supervisors in every California county and to mayors of 88 cities. Meanwhile, generic posters (not including information on the event) will be distributed to people around the country who want to remind parents and professionals of the importance of correct safety seat/belt use on every ride to protect kids. (In Austin, TX, come by our exhibit booth at Lifesavers or visit our Social to get yours.)

Special Enforcement Week

The annual Special Enforcement Week is set for April 16 - 22. Led by the **Peace Officers Association of Los Angeles County**, law enforcement professionals will take that week to focus on identifying kids riding loose or not properly buckled up and youngsters in the front seat.

Agencies across the County are signing up, and other counties and states nationwide are invited to join in. Research shows that visible enforcement is the most effective way to reduce inconsistent or non- use of appropriate restraint systems.

For copies of Proclamations for your community, posters, flyers, press releases, and other information or to register as a checker, volunteer, or family, call 310/222-6860.

Nissan Sponsors Social

Nissan North America is sponsoring the 3rd Annual SBS USA Social held in conjunction with Lifesavers Conference. Open to all, the Hilton Austin, Room 406 is the site for the informal gathering on 4/10 from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. as a break in the busy conference routine.

SBS USA staff look forward to a chance to meet and greet old friends and new advocates. National Partnership on Booster Seat Safety members plan to participate. To have your name tag ready on site, RSVP to stombrello@carseat.org. Join us!

CALENDAR

SPECIAL ENFORCEMENT WEEK
APRIL 16 - 22
SAFETY SEAT CHECKUP WEEK
APRIL 23 - 29

CONFERENCES

*4/20: For Californians: **SBS USA Technical Teleconference**, 9:55 am-11:35 am. Sponsored by CA OTS & CA DHS. Call SBS USA for telephone number and code.

Visit the SBS USA booths here:

- *4/9-11: **Lifesavers**, Austin, TX
- *5/10-12: **CA PTA**, Anaheim, CA.
- *8/9-11: **Kidz in Motion**, Orlando

Call 310/222-6860 to register for these:
SAFETY SEAT CHECKUP DAY

*4/29: Petersen Automotive Museum, Los Angeles, CA. 10 am - 2 pm. Call 310/222-6860.

CHECKER TRAINING

- *4/18: 12:30 - 5:00 p.m. *or*
- *4/19: 8:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Torrance, CA. Sponsored by Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A.

EDUCATOR WORKSHOP

*4/25: 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Little Company of Mary Hospital, Torrance. Sponsored by CA OTS
Certification training planned in Los Angeles for May!

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CPS Pioneer Remembered: Robert S. Sanders, MD

Bob Sanders and wife Pat started a national landslide when they stimulated Tennessee to pass the first mandatory U.S. safety seat use law.

A public-health-oriented pediatrician, Sanders saw the need to require safety seat use by law, not simply to educate, to stem the rising tide of pediatric deaths in the car.

By 1978, crash-tested safety seats were on the market, although federal regulation requiring dynamic testing was not completed until 1981. Following Tennessee, every other state had passed a version of this primary law by 1985, enabling law enforcement officers to pull over vehicles with children riding loose.

Bob and Pat remained dedicated to CPS. His death on 1/19/06 is a major loss, but his legacy is embodied in the many children who have thrived after escaping injury or death in a motor vehicle crash.

Color Pictorial Update

SBS USA's Color Pictorial Guide to Child Restraints, which helps professionals and advocates identify seats without a visible model name, has been updated.

Safety seats made 1981 to the present are grouped by harness type and manufacturer. The guide includes a color photo for each seat and the first and last date made.

Since stickers with model numbers and dates often come off, this guide is an essential tool for checking recalls and determining which set of instructions to use at checkup events and fitting stations. Available for viewing only at www.carseat.org > Parents' Corner > Identify your safety seat, copies may be purchased for \$50 plus shipping from SBS USA.

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- \$1,625 Darren Qunell*
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- \$250 Derek Whitefield, Esq.
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- \$150 Isabelle Becker
- \$125 Vella Black-Roberts
Child Care Links
Children's Hospital of Orange Co.
Marc Cohen
Jan Darter

**For 2006 membership year*

**Watch for a CPS
story on ABC News
20/20 in April!**

New California Booster Bill

Assembly Member **Noreen Evans** introduced AB 2108, to mandate use of a safety seat or booster up to age eight unless the child is 4'9" or taller.

Other provisions of the bill require children 12 and under to ride in the back seat, with some exceptions, and babies to ride in a rear-facing safety seat until they reach *both* one year and 20 pounds.

The first hearing will be held by the Assembly Transportation Committee on April 24. Letters to members of the committee are needed from organizations and California residents. The bill is sponsored by *SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.*, Safe Kids California, and California Coalition for Children's Safety and Health.

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

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Adults Are Role Models for Tweens

In February, Christene Jennings of Automotive Coalition for Traffic Safety (ACTS) released key findings of two demonstration projects aimed at increasing proper restraint use for 8-to-12 year olds.

Based in an urban, highly Latino Texan community & a rural Caucasian environment in MO, the research outcomes showed that parents are the key to where and how tweens traveled in cars. Only 63% of the TX sample and 48% from MO always buckled up. A third sat in front, increasing the risk. Fatality data show when adult drivers are not restrained, 91% of 8-to-15 year olds who died were unbuckled, too.

Reflecting older findings of basic research on adult buckle-up behavior, the studies ACTS reported showed if adults decided where kids sit in the car and asked them to buckle up, 16% more complied than on their own. "The captain of the ship" effect was clear when paired with comprehensive legal requirements that do not permit back seat occupants to ride unrestrained or more occupants to travel than the number of belts available. Kids do as adults do more readily than just as they say.

Allowing kids to choose the radio station can reduce their desire to sit up front, increasing safety.

Britney Spears Highlights Problems

When celebrity mom Britney Spears was photographed driving with her infant in arms, a firestorm of criticism ensued. Britney became the focus of online and media reports on the risk to which her child was exposed. Ironic as it was to see a child born into such an advantaged environment at risk, the picture unfortunately reflects a common pattern.

Based on data from violators of the CPS law sent to Family Safety in the Car classes in Los Angeles County, SBS USA reports that more than 90% of parents ticketed owned a safety seat. Many had a seat in the vehicle but were not using it

Another factor is that parents who are drivers or front seat passengers often bring youngsters up front when they are awaiting additional passengers. Few parents are aware that they may be modeling behavior that could cause tragedy if their children copy it on their own in future. They don't expect kids to "drive" the car independently. Young children have gotten vehicles moving when out of parents' sight and either suffered severe or fatal injury or killed children outside the vehicle. Children rarely belong in the front until they are getting ready to obtain driver's licenses.

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SafetyBeltSafe News

March 2006

Booster Seats: Are They Safe?

Why use boosters? A compact review of the subject is presented in “Booster Seats & the Transition from Child Restraints to Adult Seat Belts” in *Topics in Emergency Medicine*, 1-3/06.

Chris Sherwood, MS and Drs R. Kent and J. Crandall address the subject from the risks to 5-to-9 year olds for whom traffic crashes are the source of 21% of deaths and 53% of unintentional injuries, to biomechanical aspects of child development leading to vulnerability to particular types of injury.

By describing physical and behavioral factors which make it unlikely that young children can be adequately protected in safety belts alone in current vehicles, the authors lead in to the current data on the performance of boosters. On the question of ranking broad categories of booster design, Sherwood et al. assert current data are insufficient to choose either backless or highback styles in *every* instance.

Clearly, the best booster design ensures that children meet the 5-Step Test* when using it until they can do so without it. Most issues are with designs that either do not keep the lap belt flat on the tops of the thighs and/or permit automatic re-adjustment of the shoulder belt snugly on the chest after a child moves forward in the belt. Kids need head support from a booster back or vehicle seat and benefit if the design helps to keep the head protected from side impacts.

With the focus on biomechanics as well as data from peer-reviewed papers, the authors may increase the confidence of CPS advocates in promoting booster use. (*See flyer #630 at www.carseat.org)

Kids as Cargo?!

The usual CPS focus is getting children buckled up properly. However, some parents are using their vehicle *trunks* as passenger compartments!

Over the past year, a series of news reports have documented the use of trunk space to increase the number of passengers for interstate trips, punishment compartments, and even for daytime daycare. One case ended tragically when the 8 year old was found dead in the vehicle after his mother completed her workday.

A more common explanation is that there were too many passengers for the vehicle so someone “had” to ride in the trunk. One vehicle in CA was followed for more than 70 miles before being pulled over. An alert citizen had observed the initial placement of 2 children in the trunk of a 5-passenger vehicle, in which 7 more were riding. Police were called and they ultimately found the vehicle.

Another parent said her preschoolers had misbehaved in a store, so she stowed them in the trunk for punishment and then drove with 9 occupants in the vehicle. This punishment is not only inappropriate but also dangerous for many reasons. Since 2002, internal release systems for trunks have been required; nevertheless, there are far more vehicles with trunks that can trap unsuspecting children. Modeling for children that they can hide in a car trunk is a serious error. The heat build-up can doom children quickly.

In addition to keeping cars locked and teaching children not to play in the trunk, families with pre-'02 vehicles can obtain inexpensive trunk release kits to be sure that no child is trapped inside.

What are “After Market Products” and Why Should You Care?

The inventor of a new safety seat toy wrote SBS USA for help in figuring out how to assure families the product was safe for use in the car. A Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Technician asked what to do when others tried to remove items aimed to help infants ride comfortably, even when they are designed into the safety seat being checked.

Everyone wants to help families do the best for their children. Some items are positively dangerous for use in the car; others are useful additions, tested for this purpose; and, finally, some are specifically included by manufacturers of safety seats and therefore, have been dynamically tested as part of the self-certification procedure.

Some safety seats come with infant inserts that improve fit for small babies. The instructions, which usually state the insert is to be used until the baby reaches a certain size, should be followed. Other seats come with optional padding or pillows. Technicians should help parents decide whether the child will be more comfortable with or without them. If a pillow pushes the child's head forward, it can be both uncomfortable and dangerous if it causes an infant's head to flop so the airway is blocked.

What about adding after-market padding to a safety seat? It's fine to use rolled receiving blankets or diapers along each side of a newborn's body for support *after* adjusting the harness snugly. No padding should be placed under or behind the baby or between the baby and the harness. The exception is a tightly folded diaper placed between the crotch and crotch strap, to help prevent slumping. There also are special products made for this purpose.

Manufacturers of vehicles or safety seats prohibit use of some products because they may damage the belts or become missiles in a crash. Safety belt tighteners and toys that parents would not like hurled at their child's face at 30 mph are good examples. Using this “test” helps parents to decide which items are appropriate for use in the car.

When a product designer approaches SBS USA, we recommend consultation with a source like the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute, with long-term competence in safety seat testing, federal standards, and design issues that might pose other risks when an item is attached to a safety seat or used in the car.

Many designers are aware of all of the U.S.

Consumer Product Safety Commission standards with which to comply but struggle to find a way to prove that their designs won't compromise safety in the car. Some of these products are created in response to known issues, such as children resisting riding in safety seats or learning how to undo buckles or slither out of harness systems. SBS USA has a reproducible handout, “But my child won't stay in the car seat!,” with tips to encourage consistent, correct use. However, when a child persists, serious or fatal outcomes can occur.

A grandmother wrote SBS USA, telling how one of her grandchildren died. The 3-year-old had gotten out of her safety seat while traveling, and her mother asked the booster-age sibling to put her back in. Flustered by the situation, the mom lost control of the vehicle, leading to a horrific crash. The unrestrained younger child died. The grieving grandmother begs drivers to “PULL OVER” instead of trying to handle such situations while moving.

A mother called, shocked that her previously compliant 19-month-old suddenly unbuckled and stood upright in her safety seat as they sped down the freeway. The minutes until she could get to an exit were terrifying and led her to design a solution.

In 1990, with federal research funding, Yellowstone Environmental Services, with SBS USA collaboration, studied and reported on this issue. They recommended that designs incorporate child-resistant features (similar to the use of special caps on medicines). During our survey of English and Spanish-speaking families, it became clear most children occasionally try to get themselves out of safety seats. However, only a small percent persisted. Unless safety seat manufacturers respond to the problem, after-market items will be needed to prevent tragedies and promote happier use of safety seats.

Since NHTSA does not regulate after-market products, advocates and parents need guidance to determine which ones are essential or helpful and not potentially dangerous. Find out which tests were performed and make a visual check to see if the product changes the positioning of the child in the seat or affects harness routing or snugness, which could affect performance. In some cases, it may be necessary to use a different safety seat or a special needs product to solve the problem.