

SafetyBeltSafe News

Volume 27, No. 6



November 2006

KIDZ in Motion Conference—a Chance to Share and Learn!

Thanks to **Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Safety Angel International, Chicco U.S.A., Evenflo Juvenile Products,** and **Children's Hospital of Denver,** a lively group of CPS advocates converged on Orlando, Florida for the 2nd annual KIM Conference and a Special Needs training in August. Workshops included specific details of vehicle safety features; ways to improve teaching outcomes; and ideas for conveying CPS information to non-CPS professionals.

SBS USA offered an exhibit, a workshop on the pilot program to teach child welfare social workers to transport kids properly, and a Roundtable presentation on the nagging issues facing CPS (see Conference CD for details). Longtime SBS USA Senior Program Consultant Cheryl Kim was recognized as a CPS Hero, a well-deserved plaudit.

Issues of Concern: Stephanie Tombrello, SBS USA, and Deborah Stewart, Safe Ride News Publications, compiled the gaps with the most implications. The conference group strongly addressed maintaining lockability in FMVSS 208 (1/06 & 9/06*) by requesting a petition to sign which led to the current campaign. Other concerns, some of which have been introduced in prior issues of *SBS News* as noted, generated broad discussion.

After-market products (3/06*) have generated negative responses from the CPS community. Yet most products arise due to human difficulties related to proper CPS efforts. Either safety seat manufacturers need to confront the problems and take the better products under their wings or another body, other than National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), needs to monitor their producers' self-certification of testing for negative interactions in crashes. Some major projects that

need to be addressed include children "escaping" from harnesses when parents cannot pull over; older children releasing safety belts; sun protection; parental need to see babies' faces; arthritic hands vs. tight belts; and vehicle seat protectors.

Aging safety seats and the related issue of the plethora of seats per child, which then end in a landfill, lead to the lack of concrete research on the true risk of older seats and the contentious issue of re-using seats. There are strong opinions on both sides. (See 9/06* concerning the complexity of recycling discarded seats.) Although 10 years was the general discard recommendation early on, most companies are adding expiration dates 6-8 years post-manufacture.

The KIM conference group also took up evaluating correct use increases by comparing checkup/fitting station clients for the balance of 2006. The specific comparison is installation misuse between those who arrived using LATCH vs. belt systems. Of those using LATCH, how often was misuse tied to a) center installation with 2 inner bars or using belt AND LATCH (1/06*) and b) loose installation? SBS USA has modified our checkup form to capture these data. Representatives from a number of states indicated enthusiasm for involvement. (For a copy of the form, e-mail stombrello@carseat.org.)

Other issues discussed were the need for names on safety seats (1/05*) and how to get 100% compliance; progress on the tether anchor strength and LATCH bar ratings (5/06*) on which an industry meeting has been held; the need for a national safety seat access program; and how to teach CPS principles. (Examples were described in 7/05, 11/05, 7/06*.)

**Dates of the SBS News issue addressing these issues.*

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Calendar

March 25-27, 2007

Lifesavers 2007 in Chicago. Go to
www.lifesaversconference.org for
updated information.

**April 28, 2007 is Safety Seat
Checkup Day**

April 9-11, 2007

**OTS Traffic Safety Summit – San
Diego** – “Celebrating 40 Years of
Traffic Safety”
More info next issue!

August 1-4, 2006

KIM Conference – Denver
Go to www.kidzinmotion.org for
details and registration info.

Recalls

Dorel Juvenile Group has recalled the *Comfort Infant Car Seat*, sold under both the Alpha Elite and Eddie Bauer brand names, and made between 7/26/05 and 2/28/06. Handle screws loosen and can become a choking hazard.

To identify the seats for which the repair kit is needed, parents are asked to identify which base the seat has: the original or redesigned version. Call 877/229-1374.

Britax Companion (E9L14) made 10/31/03-6/6/04 may be incorrectly assembled, causing improper seating of the carrier in the base and allowing too much forward rotation in an impact.

Call 888/427-4829 to see if replacement is necessary. In the interim, use the carrier without the base. Britax also warns Companion owners to be sure the carry handle is pointing toward the vehicle floor during transport.

Another **Britax** recall is for the *Boulevard* (E9L57) made 3/1/06 to 8/1/06 (does not apply to Marathon or Decathlon). During crash testing with the 6-year-old (48-lb) dummy, the tether hook opened or broke, and the restraint changed recline position, which is prohibited by the federal standard. To comply with the standard, Britax is notifying owners that the top tether should not be used if the child weighs more than 50 lbs. However, Britax has informed *SafetyBeltSafe* U.S.A. that crash performance was actually improved with the open hook.

Parents should be assisted with making an informed decision about using the tether for larger children, who are the ones that benefit most from tether use.

SPECIAL THANKS

Last summer, SBS USA was frantically looking for a storage site for our large collection of safety seats, both current and historical, most of which are used in teaching. To our rescue came our friends at **Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A.** Now we have a super set up, and our many seats are stored so we can get to them efficiently. Not only are they safe, but the new system saves us rental fees.

Meanwhile **American Honda Motors** continues to store seats that are given to low-income families at checkups.

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YouTube Video Sparks Concerns

Kyle David Miller, 40 lbs., 3 years old, and riding in a booster, was ejected in a rollover crash and died 5/29/05. His almost-5-year-old sister, restrained in the same system, survived all 4 rolls.

Christine Miller memorializes her son on a YouTube video, promoting the use of 5-point-harness safety seats with tethers far beyond 40 lbs. Other goals are to raise awareness that safety belts may fail and to encourage testing the use of both LATCH attachments and safety belts to hold safety seats in place. A foundation in Kyle's name supports access to safety seats for low-income youngsters.

Kyle's story ignited concern and generated interest in resuming use of 5-point-harness safety seats for older kids. But because of Miller's contention that the safety belt holding Kyle into his booster failed, the video implies parents should avoid using vehicle belts to protect children, either to attach harnessed safety seats or with a booster.

Data do not indicate frequent instances of belt failure/buckle unlatching. Investigations conducted through the Center for Injury Research & Prevention at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia of 800 crashes in which appropriately restrained children were injured or killed, did not turn up any such cases.

Their 2003 paper examining subsets of children ages 4 to 8 riding unrestrained, belted, or in boosters, shows a 38% reduction of injury for kids in belts compared to those unrestrained and an additional 59% reduction between belted and "boosted" kids.

Since the '70s, reported effectiveness of forward-facing safety seats has been based on a comparative study of kids in crashes 1974-84. Much has changed since then, including a drop in unrestrained kids from 54% to 9%! Examining outcomes for children 12-47 months in the back seats of vehicles, excluding pickups, which were towed away post-crash, the CHOP team compared those in safety seats, virtually all restrained by belts, and kids in belts alone. The reduction in injury risk was 71%. The overall risk to the safety-seat kids was less than 1%, despite 80% incorrect use..

SBS USA turned to Chip Chidester, National Center for Statistics & Analysis of NHTSA to pursue data on belt failure. He reports that data from National Automotive Sampling System-Crashworthiness Data System (CDS) indicate belt failure, of any kind, for children is rare, possibly occurring once or twice annually.

(Continued on pg 5)

YouTube Video (continued from pg 3)...

Overall results for the past 8 years for kids 14 and under in CDS crashes was about .05%; such failures may result from any aspect of the crash, from massive destruction of the belt in the crash to a buckle release. Using these nationally representative data, NCSA calculated unrestrained children 0 to 4 years, 5 to 7 years, and 8 to 14 years were 6.6, 14.9, and 10 times more likely respectively to receive serious-to-fatal injury compared to those restrained, a statistically significant finding at $p < .05$ level.

NHTSA investigates reports of failures due to equipment malfunction through the Office of Defects Investigation where all such incidents should be sent.

However, there have been data collected indicating problems of buckle release either due to the mechanism being activated by flailing arms or legs or flying objects, by particular "pulses" from webbing elongation, or by deterioration of internal springs. Certain designs have been recalled over the years, so the issue should not be ignored.

Decisions for Parents

What can parents do to increase confidence in their choices for their kids? Suggestions by SBS USA fall into the following areas: 1) recognizing each stage of restraint as a demotion, not a graduation, 2) examining vehicle features and buckle recalls; 3) being aware of harnessed safety seats for larger kids; 4) learning to assess safety seats in relation to one's own kids, cars, and lifestyles.

How parents and professionals can make sure children are as safe as possible:

1) Keep children rear facing until 18-24 months.

2) Use a seat with an internal harness as long as possible.

3) Use a booster until the child can pass the 5-Step Test in the vehicle in which he/she is riding.

4) Ride in the back until age 15.

Parents can check for recall information for their vehicles. When looking for another vehicle, consider those with electronic stability control systems and side curtain air bags, both of which show promise in reducing the number of rollovers and ejections, respectively. [See SBS News, 7/06 & 11/04.] Safety belts have been documented as the best tool to reduce vehicle deaths, but several crash avoidance and mitigation features give additional benefit.

Once parents look at seats accommodating bigger kids, here are practical issues to review:

1) Fit the chosen product into the vehicle. Will parents move the product from car to car?

2) Use the tether for higher-weight kids' seats. Get tether anchors retrofitted in pre-'99 vehicles.

3) Recognize that belts are the chief restraint system used and don't ignore limits on the LATCH system.

4) Understand that the internal harness of virtually all combination child seat/boosters is certified to 40 lbs.

5) Check the top harness slot height for any higher-weight seat to ensure it will be at or above the child's shoulders.

6) Recognize that rear facing is preferred for kids up to 18-24 months and don't move to a forward-facing seat before then.

7) When using a booster, consider locking the switchable retractor on the shoulder-lap belt to ensure movement of the child doesn't introduce slack in the belt. Use the center location if an appropriate belt is available.

Products with a harness for children over 40 lbs. (*indicates high weight rear facing as well)

To 100 lbs or more: Columbia 2000, to 102 lbs. & 2500, to 130 lbs; Snug Seat Traveller Plus, to 105 lbs; E-Z-On Products of FL Vests and 86-Y harness

To 80 lbs: Britax Regent; Reha-Partner Recaro Start Plus; Safe Traffic System Ride Safer Vest; Sunshine Kids Radian80*

To 55-65 lbs.: Britax Boulevard*, Decathlon*, Marathon*; Dorel Apex 65; Fisher-Price Safe Voyage;* IMMI SafeGuard Child Seat; IMMI SafeGuard Go; Safe Traffic System Ride Safer Vest; Safety Angel Ride Ryte; Sunshine Kids Radian65*

Owners of the **Dorel Comfort Infant Seat** may request a re-designed base by calling 877/229-1374. The original base is difficult to install, prompting a Customer Satisfaction Program by the company. *This is not a recall.*

Candidates for the next two years of service on the Board of Directors are awaiting confirmation by members. Don't forget to vote!

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Technical Updates and CEUs

The newly revised Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Reference and Teaching Guide was used first at the October training held by SBS USA. Not only was the main book revised but so were each of the short books covering special topics—distribution programs, early childhood approaches, and special needs issues. Available from SBS USA for \$50 plus shipping and handling, the package includes the current CD of Child Restraint Manufacturers' Instructions, the current recall list, and sample brochures.

Thanks to a grant from *Nissan North America*, the *SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.* team is intensively working on the update for the CD of instructions, which should be completed in 2007.

CPS Express! has listed announced several SBS USA resources that help Certified CPS Technicians and Instructors meet the new Continuing Education Unit (CEU) requirements for recertification. Detailed information is available at www.carseat.org and on a flyer available on request from the office. SBS USA subscribers/members may request a code for a CEU annually for the newsletter. Attendees of the SBS USA Educator Workshop may earn 3 CEUs, and through June, 2007, Californians may pick up a CEU code during the bimonthly Technical Teleconference presented by SBS USA with support from California Office of Traffic Safety and California Department of Health Services. The next one is scheduled for December 21.

SBS USA is considering holding additional technical teleconferences; let us know if this would be a resource that you would want to use.

School Bus Crash Kills 4 in AL

Just two weeks after the November 6 release of a study on non-fatal injuries on school buses, four teenagers died and 29 others were injured when a school bus crashed near Huntsville, Alabama. Early reports indicate that the school bus was sideswiped by a passenger car before it plunged through the guardrail of an Interstate overpass, landing 30 feet below on its "nose". No safety belts for passengers were available on the bus. An in-depth crash analysis will be conducted.

Jennifer McGeehan, Center for Innovation in Pediatric Practice in SBS USA member organization Columbus Children's Hospital, Research Institute, in Ohio, said the study was based on data from 99 hospital emergency rooms nationwide. The study found, annually, 17,000 students seen in the ER were injured either on, entering, leaving, or standing near school buses from '01-'03. The data are collected by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission as part of their hospital surveillance system in place since 1978 and covered the entire year, not just September to June. More than 42% of injuries were due to car crashes.

Most injuries were strains, sprains, abrasions, and contusions, and, in 15% of cases, were lacerations, mainly to the head. The study authors recommend a second adult to supervise students, leaving the driver in charge of the bus itself. Authors also expressed interest in looking at belts for buses. New York, New Jersey, Florida, and California have very different laws requiring belts on buses.



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Dear *SafetyBeltSafe News* Reader:

Just before it was time to seek your support, we heard from the Certification Program, managed by Safe Kids Worldwide, that *SafetyBeltSafe News* subscription will entitle Technicians to qualify for one Continuing Education Unit each year toward the six that are needed for recertification. With a new volunteer Editorial Board and our long history of publication, we look forward to serving the child passenger safety community into the future.

Perhaps that will inspire you to make a special effort to renew before the end of the year and assure the ongoing flow of our services to you through December 2007. Assist us in keeping the toll-free Safe Ride Helplines, in English and Spanish, and the interactive Web site current and available.

We seek grants and contracts regularly and have been particularly successful recently. Members and subscribers, however, are crucial both to provide funds and show that our organization has a wide range of users.

All supporters will receive a complete annual packet, including the current List of Recalls and Replacement Parts, bimonthly *SafetyBeltSafe News*, access to the Audiovisual Library without a rental fee, and a 10% discount on metal buckle-up signs.

The special Web access service is available in 2007 for supporters at the \$100 level or above: the password-controlled subscription Web page with the new and revised manufacturers' instructions received since 10/05. To date, 63 new or revised instructions have been posted. We shall continue to offer Recall Update Service at the Supporting/Community Organization (\$50) level and above. Notification of new or revised materials, including our List of Recalls and Replacement Parts for Child Restraints, will be sent by e-mail. At this level, each will be given a password to download and print the list from our Web site at any time. We will send a paper copy of the recall list if you have no e-mail service available.

The bimonthly *Safe Ride News*, another 1 CEU per year, will be included routinely to those who renew or subscribe at the \$200 level and above. For 2007, we again are offering a CPS Tech Special for those at the \$100 level and above: *Safe Ride News* and a CD of the Manufacturers' Instructions to be completed in 2007 for an additional \$25.

If your employer matches contributions to tax-deductible organizations like ours, please encourage them to equal your support. Help us keep our services and programs fresh and up-to-date.

Sincerely yours,

Marisa Gonzalez
Secretary, Board of Directors

PS Our Educator Workshops now earn Techs 3 CEUs. MG