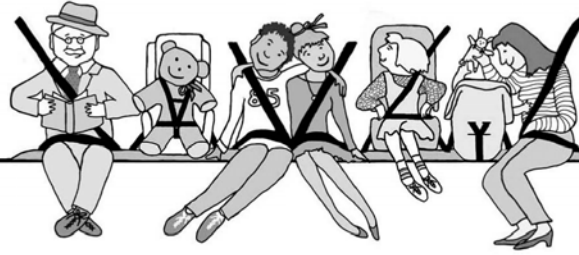


# SafetyBeltSafe News

Volume 28, No. 2

March 2007



## Safety Seat Checkup Week! April 22-28

April 28 is the culmination of Safety Seat Checkup Week when families are invited to register for a thorough inspection of how their children ride. **Petersen Automotive Museum** is the site from 10 am to 2 pm. Teams of trained checkers will offer their services before families tour the museum where *SafetyBeltSafe* U.S.A. has an exhibit on the history of child passenger safety.

Thanks to California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) and Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., our key sponsors, we are offering two training opportunities to precede the Week as well. (See Calendar, pg 2.)

Checkers are needed from 9 am to 3 pm, and volunteers of all ages can help from 8 am to help set up and afterward to help clean up the site. Usually, we find more than 90% incorrect use, and checkers feel satisfaction in reversing this—and enjoy a free lunch! Many law enforcement agencies, with the commitment of the **Peace Officers Association of Los Angeles County**, will focus on child passenger safety (CPS) violations during *Special Enforcement Week* April 15-21. Join in to reduce risk of injury in motor vehicle crashes.

You can put up posters, pass out flyers (see p. 6 for a master that you can photocopy), and refer families to 310/222-6860 to sign up to be checked. Thanks to **ColorGraphics** for donating posters for local use in southern California, listing the event on April 28, and Safety Seat Checkup Week posters without the event date.

Finally, remind your community that buckling up is a family affair.

## United States Comes in Next to Last

A *Los Angeles Times* article, 2/15/07, covered a recent UNICEF study of the well-being of kids in 21 developed countries, looking at outcomes in six categories, from personal happiness to material well-being.

Two categories of special interest to CPS advocates are health and safety. From the news report on the study, conducted by Innocenti Research Center in Italy: “The U.S. was at the bottom of the list in health and safety, mostly because of high rates of child mortality and accidental deaths.”

The United States ranked next to last in “family and peer relationships and risk-taking behavior.” It seems we have our work cut out for us!

## Coming Soon:

The Child Restraint Manufacturers’ Instructions and Summary Sheets 2007 will be available soon. Expected to exceed 4000 pages and essential for anyone who works directly with the public to consult on safety seats, it will contain full instructions for all safety seats, harnesses, and beds made from 1996-2006 plus consistently-formatted summary sheets to guide users to key points.

All current members entitled to a CD and all with orders on hand will be first in line with May availability expected.

Single copies of the CD are \$10, with no shipping charge; California residents, add tax. For multiple copies, go to [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org) for details. The cost for printed copies will be announced soon.

## Recalls

**Britax Regent:** (E9L3998) made 12/18/06 to 1/18/07, has an incorrect warning label on the cover. Call 888/4BRITAX for a new cover.

**Compass Infant Car Seat:** (I 420 with fabric codes ARD, FUE, MAR) made 5/07/- 5/15/06. The metal slide on the end of the crotch strap may not be installed correctly, which could cause a crack in the shell in a crash. Check that the slide lies flat against shell in the correct location.

To receive a drawing of the correct installation, call 888/899-2229 or go to <http://compassbaby.com/Manuals/I420%20WKI-%20Draft.pdf>.

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## Big Thanks to CSK Auto!

With a gift of \$2480, CSK Auto enabled SBS USA to place safety seats for distribution at 3 agencies in southern California. Columbus Clinic, The Children's Collective, and Toberman Settlement House serve different areas of Los Angeles Co. and are committed to excellent pre-gift education and technical consultation for their clients.

We commend CSK Auto for working with established resources known by families in need rather than holding sporadic one-day mass distributions. The need for ongoing resources for low-income families is a critical piece of CPS programming. The gift was announced at an October soccer match featuring the LA Galaxy team whose total team goals are the basis for funding levels.

## Thank You, Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Program Sponsor:

Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A. (TMS USA) has a long history of underwriting CPS services from SBS USA and has provided a gift of \$25,000 for 2007 to meet two major goals.

First, as a long-time Sponsor of Safety Seat Checkup Week, TMS USA joins CA OTS in enabling widespread publicity and a festive checkup for 2007. The gift has been increased substantially to maintain Safe Ride Helpline services nationwide. This core service offers both professionals and parents, in English or Spanish, chances to ask questions and receive materials appropriate to children's needs as well as help in developing programs.

## Calendar

### TRAINING

(No registration fee thanks to California Office of Traffic Safety, Claremont Police Department, Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A.)

#### Technical Update Class

\*4/16: 8:30 am to 5:00 pm

Claremont, CA. 5 CEUs for

Techs and Instructors

(Note: Participants must check seats at Safety Seat Checkup Day, April 28.)

#### Educator Workshop

\*4/18, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm

Claremont, CA

3 CEUs for Techs and Instructors;

6 CEUS for nurses. All attendees

must participate in at least 1

checkup for hands-on training.

#### CPS Nat'l Certification Course

\*May 3, 4, 7, 8: 8:00 am to 5:30

pm. Altadena, CA. Mandatory

checkup May 9, site TBA.

Participant fee: \$950; Certification

fee \$60.

*Nissan North America*

*Scholarships to \$500 available.*

Prerequisite: Educator Workshop

and participation in at least one

safety seat checkup. Applications

from [ckim@carseat.org](mailto:ckim@carseat.org).

### April 22-28

#### Safety Seat Checkup Week

April 28 is

#### Safety Seat Checkup Day

### Technical Teleconferences

Listen to recorded teleconferences

online or by telephone at your

convenience. Prepay \$25

registration fee for one CEU per

teleconference per listener.

For registration form, visit

[www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org) > Tools for Techs

> CEUs or call SBS USA office.

The March 5 recording is available

now. The next teleconference will

be available April 5.

**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.  
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 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*, which qualifies for 1 Continuing Education Unit per year for recertifying Technicians with subscriber code. \$200 or more automatically includes *Safe Ride News*.  
 \_\_\_ Check here if you are a Certified Technician or Instructor and want information about CEUs for subscribers.

**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 September, 2005)

*Special for \$100 members: Add \$25 and receive Safe Ride News thru 2007 & latest CD of safety seat manufacturers' instructions!*

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 Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Exp \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

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## Safety Seat-Connected Risks

Jim Savage of Children's Hospital of Denver reported an incident in which a trailing LATCH connector caught on the tire of a moving vehicle. The lower connectors were loose on either side of the safety seat. The connector outside the car hooked into a tire, leading to the one-piece webbing tearing through the plastic of the safety seat, with the connector hook injuring the child's thigh.

An unintended outcome from the use of LATCH is a report of a child in Kentucky whose safety seat was LATCH-attached but who put the unused shoulder-lap belt around his neck. Because the belt was pulled all the way out, the locking mechanism engaged, and parents could not remove it from the child's neck. Luckily, they had not yet entered the freeway and were able to stop and use scissors to sever the belt. Use SBS USA flyer #646 to warn families of preschoolers.

An article by Shirley Tonkin et al. from *British Medical Journal*, 12/06, reports nine infants under age 10 weeks with apnea events in safety seats, turning "blue" by parental description. All but one were full-term. Researchers followed them for a year with only one known recurrence. The authors suggest a "cut out" in the safety seat for the child's head would reduce this risk and warn against leaving babies to sleep unattended in safety seats. Based on known nicotine effects, parental smoking may increase this risk.

## Reducing Injuries

A usage survey of kids leaving school, held by SBS USA with help from LAPD, was encouraging in that no unrestrained children were observed. This indicates success in making buckling up socially normative. However, optimal choices for *how* kids should ride are not always reflected in either CPS literature or parental decisions.

Chris Sherwood, University of Virginia research scientist at Center for Applied Biomechanics, and his team are assessing the features of protection systems that reduce injuries. Prime among them is rear facing much longer than traditionally recommended. Data from crash tests show clearly that rear-facing safety seats reduce risk. Keeping kids rear facing until 3-4 years would "reduce the rate of injury and mortality of U.S. children ... by more than 50%" in crashes."

Sherwood reports risks to kids rear facing in pickup truck front seats when there is a gap between the safety seat and the dashboard. Having the seat touch the dash prevents a "slamming" motion which causes head injury. The more rigidly a safety seat is attached to a vehicle, the lower the injury incidence. The new design approach of the rigid rod to support the rear-facing safety seat meets this criterion but doesn't test well under FMVSS 213 conditions.

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**SafetyBeltSafe News**

**March 2007**

## CU Releases Report on Disputed Safety Seat Testing

With commendable speed, Consumers Union (CU) set up a team of experienced consultants to examine the process that resulted in a flurry of TV, radio, and print coverage, scaring parents with the news that their infant-only seats would not do well in side-impact crashes.

When National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) hastily ran a series of tests, they realized that the CU test protocols were generating forces that, in a real world event, would have simulated not a 38-mph collision but one in which a vehicle at 70 mph smashed into another vehicle. The full report will be covered in the 5/07 issue of *Consumer Reports* (CR). The goal is avoiding a release of inaccurate results. In the future, CU has committed to

- 1) confer with outside experts when considering innovative testing;
- 2) ensure outside testing labs, used due to their equipment and expertise, are evaluated by at least one outside expert in the field as a watchdog on the testing process itself;
- 3) review "unusual" results with even greater care before publication.

CU scrupulously eschews contact with manufacturers and government regulators to maintain independence. In this case, they tried to simulate a more demanding side-impact test without consulting those already working on this challenging problem. CU will not repeat this effort until greater scientific consensus on methods is achieved. Moreover, NHTSA criticized the replication of CU's methods as

used on the Evenflo Discovery, leading CU to withdraw their recall request on that product. Finally, CU will withdraw use of a 35-mph frontal crash-test protocol until general agreement on its approach is achieved.

The major error was one of communication between CU and Calspan (test lab) staff concerning the test speed to use for side impact simulation. In essence, CU asked for a 38-mph speed for the striking "vehicle;" Calspan simulated a 38-mph velocity for the struck vehicle after impact, a consequence if the striking vehicle moved at 70 mph, which, in reality, is highly uncommon and not survivable. For a complete explanation, see the *Safe Ride News* Web site, under New, as well as CR 5/07.

The goal of "stronger" safety seats may be suitable but while half of the kids under 5 dying in car crashes are totally unrestrained, much effort must be directed to correct, consistent use of appropriate restraint systems. Happily, SBS USA and *Safe Ride News* are listed in CR 5/07 but would have preferred some description of our experience. Perhaps CU believes parents know us, while we know many have no idea where to turn for current information.

SBS USA believes the installation problems with the Dorel Comfort Infant warranted a voluntary recall, as many parents assume that any safety seat in any vehicle, both certified safe to NHTSA, will work and may never seek the available replacement base. CU said the model was discontinued so they are backing off. However, we note many infants use them now and will for years.

## LATCH Meeting Held by NHTSA

Nicole Nason, Administrator of NHTSA, chaired a public meeting in Washington, DC on February 8, using a series of panelists to cover four major aspects of the issue of LATCH and their ramifications. The TransAnalytics LLC report, funded by NHTSA and released 12/06, (see 1/07 issue of *SBS News*), led to the meeting. The areas of meeting discussion were technical aspects of LATCH and its use by the public; issues of testing for side impact protection; the ease-of-use aspects of LATCH use and safety seat and vehicle designs; and finally, aspects of educational approaches for reaching the public.

Panel members were given specific questions for comment. Some responses are summarized below.

Although the study showed 52% responding (69% of them knew the term LATCH) recalled a new ease-of-safety-seat-installation feature, only 55% used the top tether anchor forward facing.

Reportedly, the major benefit of tether use was unknown; parents lacked information on how to use both tethers and lower anchors. Representatives of industry, government, and non-profits shared ideas on assessing some “errors.” The vehicle industry was asked to reduce use of tether anchor locations under vehicle seats or in unusual places, making it less than intuitive for families to find or use them.

A safety seat consultant noted that by shortening LATCH bars, one could lessen the chance of two seats being connected to a single bar. He also commented that even for Britax, which has promoted tethering since arriving in the U.S., those voluntarily returning safety seats after crashes indicated only 64% use of tethers for those using lower anchors and only about 50% by those who used belts for safety seat restraint.

Several technical issues were addressed. Side-impact testing is still not finalized, although a technique perhaps more reproducible and economical than European concepts was presented by a Takata representative. The issue of continuing the shoulder-lap belt lockability requirement, currently scheduled to sunset in LATCH locations in 2012, was raised. The SBS USA-*Safe Ride News* petition (see 1/07 issue) has been received by NHTSA.

Human factors in design for the vehicle/safety seat fields were raised by Transport Canada. Subjects, both with and without experience with safety seats, were studied for preferences. Initially only 4% planned to use LATCH. When told to do so, subjects preferred push-on connectors to hooks or clips and two

separate LATCH attachments to a single strap. Having tether straps mounted low on the safety seat back tended to generate slack and was perceived as less safe. Tether strap attachment was often omitted.

The American Academy of Pediatrics representative sought LATCH in all rear seating locations. Later, Julie Robbins, CPS advocate, recommended the same for tether anchors.

NHTSA acknowledged their safety seat rating system didn't reveal most problems as all seats achieved overall A or B ratings, even if a glaring problem emerged in one area. The system will be improved to discriminate between seat designs. The section on educational approaches reviewed efforts in many sectors and garnered universal support for improvements.

At the end, audience comment was invited. The head of crashworthiness testing for Transport Canada revealed her concerns that dummy shoulders did not replicate child biomechanics. Her many tests of the common parental errors of buckling with LATCH and belts jointly or using inner bars had not turned up problems but are, as yet, unpublished. A strong plea for considering use of the rod to support rear-facing safety seats, as in Europe, was voiced by Chris Sherwood, UVA Biomechanics Ctr. (see pg 3) . Bill Hall, University of NC, reminded the group of kids nearly strangling when shoulder belts, unused due to LATCH, are playfully placed around their necks. [See pg. 3 and *SBS News*, 7/05.]

SBS USA Executive Director Stephanie Tombrello recommended starting where parents are— i.e. choosing center seat, belt and LATCH— and using design skills to minimize misuse. She shared ideas for messages with a longer projected life-time, such as rear facing much longer than a year; use of the 5-Step Test to determine booster use, including the behavioral component, noting this major difference between kids and crash dummies; and recommended including costs of Technician education and maintenance when comparing various designs and spreading educational messages widely through common parental resources. The use of tools, such as the LATCH manual, was recommended.

Nason plans a rapid response to the study findings along with an educational campaign. Input on the content of the messages is very important. Send comments on LATCH issues by 5/4/07 to NHTSA, noting Docket # NHTSA-07-26833.

*SafetyBeltSafe* U.S.A.



# Safety Seat Checkup Day

**Saturday, April 28 • 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.\***

\*For a checkup appointment, call 310/222-6860. If you do not have an appointment, there may be a wait of more than one hour or you may be turned away.

11:30 a.m. Welcome Ceremony and Recognition of Notable Guests

## Petersen Automotive Museum

6060 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles 90036 (Wilshire at Fairfax parking lot)



Buckling up is a family affair.

**Safety Seat Checkup Week April 22-28, 2007**

***Sponsors: California Office of Traffic Safety***

***Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A.***

***Major Supporter: Peace Officers Association of Los Angeles County***

### **FREE SAFETY SEAT CHECKUP**

More than 90% of the car seats we check have one or more errors.

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SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. is the national, non-profit, member-supported organization for child passenger safety.