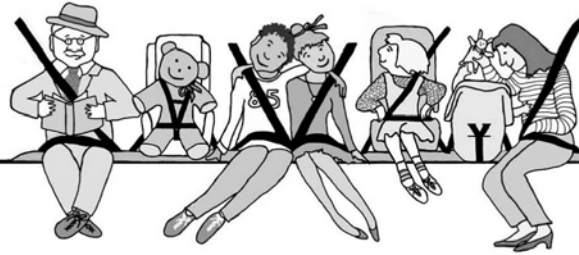


SafetyBeltSafe News

Volume 31, No. 1



January 2010

School Bus Safety in the News

Promising CT high school student Vikas Parikh died January 9 when the school bus in which he was riding crashed through a guard rail and fell 20 ft. The teacher and students flew through the bus, leading to a variety of injuries, only one of which was fatal. Parikh's death prompted his local state representative, Antonio Guerrero, to return to an often-defeated goal, belts in school buses. A recent opinion poll in Connecticut shows that three-quarters of respondents support this step. SBS USA has offered Guerrero any aid he can use.

Concurrently, Alan Ross, National Coalition of School Bus Safety Chair, Clarence Ditlow, Director, Center for Auto Safety, and Arthur Yeager, DDS have drafted a petition to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to require shoulder-lap belts in new school buses so all children are protected in the future.

Historical data show school districts rarely order buses with more than mandatory protective gear due to their very limited funding base. Yet existing California law, requiring shoulder-lap belts in newly purchased buses since 2005, has led to successful industry designs that provide easily adjusted shoulder-lap belts fitting kids from K to 12 and seat designs that do not reduce carrying capacity. To improve FMVSS 222 for school buses now would build on that capacity.

Another school-bus-related fatality, occurring just one month prior, led to another state level bill. Five-year-old Nathan Key was killed close to his Laurel, MS, home when a driver passed the stopped school bus from which he was exiting. His parents are working with MS state senator Chris McDaniel to create a law that raises the fines and other penalties for such violations. The frequency of this act has been studied in VA where 600,000 incidents occur annually and by a NY researcher, who reports 50,000 per DAY, nationally. *Only* 18 children were killed thus last year; of course, this is not acceptable. The MS bill proposes fines of \$500, license suspension for 30 days, and up to 48 hours in jail for a 1st offense, increasing to \$800, 90-day suspension, and a year in jail for subsequent violations. Injuring a child could lead to 5 years in jail. To harness technology to capture violators, cameras would be mounted on school bus stop-arms, which like red-light-running cameras, would be preventive, too.

Congratulations, IIHS! Pure Gold!

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), often the source of data to spur change for greater traffic safety, turned 50 last fall with an event to mark huge improvements in design. From the time that William Haddon, MD became President in 1969, unbiased scientific research became its hallmark. IIHS not only collected data to reveal which vehicles provided best protection in crash conditions but also did specific research projects examining policy effects or areas of behavioral or product failure.

For instance, IIHS showed how important enforcement is to increase safety belt usage, even though everyone "knew" it was important for crash survival. As new technologies impinged on the traffic environment, IIHS was there to measure them. In child passenger safety (CPS), perhaps their greatest contribution was the silent footage from 1979 of low-speed car crashes with child dummies restrained and unrestrained. This continues, quickly and effectively, to teach basic physics and engender awareness of the importance of buckling up, years after it was created. We thank IIHS and its supporters for this treasure house.

“Ride Safe from the Start” Helps

As SBS USA moves into the final quarter of pilot-testing the online “Ride Safe from the Start” education program for first-time parents-to-be, the preliminary data gathered from those who used the program have been compared to findings from those who did not have access to it.

To date, the latter have been shown to have twice the errors of the couples who participated in the program. We seek childbirth educators in the Los Angeles area who will “assign” their classes to the program so more infants have a better chance to ride home safely.

Calendar

- *4/4-10: Special Enforcement Week
- *4/11-17: Safety Seat Checkup Week
- *4/17: Safety Seat Checkup Day, Petersen Automotive Museum, Los Angeles. Call 310/222-6860.
Sponsors: CA Office of Traffic Safety and Toyota North America.

CONFERENCES

- *3/15 & 16: Moving Children Safely, San Francisco Marriott, Burlingame, CA. Register at www.injurypreventionnetwork.org/moving-children-safely-conference
- *4/10-13: Lifesavers. Philadelphia, PA. For details, go to www.lifesaversconference.org
- *8/26-28: Kidz in Motion, Ft. Worth, TX. For details, go to www.kidzinmotion.org.

SBS USA Educator Workshop

- Call 310/222-6860, to register.*
6 CEUs for Nurses; 3 CEUs for CPSTs & CPSTIs.
- *3/23: Altadena, CA, 8:30 am-5 pm.
Sponsor: Toyota North America.

New Products

Eventflo Serenade, an infant-only seat for 5-35 lbs., has a detachable, adjustable base and 5-point harness with front adjuster strap. The shoulder straps have tabs on the front to move them up and down without changing strap slots. The push-in LATCH connectors are on a strap that automatically tightens.

Eventflo Maestro is a combination seat for 20-50 lbs. with harness and 40-100 lbs. as a booster with an adjustable headrest. The 5-point harness has 4 shoulder strap slot levels, 2 crotch slots, and a front adjuster strap.

Thank You for Support in our 30th Year!

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- \$1000 Emily Alexander
- \$500 Lori Jacobs
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Becky Thams
University Medical Center /
Brackenridge Trauma Services
Walworth County Department of
Health and Human Services

Welcome, David Strickland!

January 4th marked the swearing-in of the newest NHTSA Administrator, David Strickland, an 8-year-veteran Senate staffer who contributed both to safety and CAFÉ standard improvements during his career.

Strickland takes over as the NHTSA funding reauthorization bill comes forward and the challenges of increasing safety and reducing gas usage continue.

We look forward to Strickland’s attention to both issues.

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Sunshine Kids and LATCH

As announced in 9/09 *SafetyBeltSafe News*, Sunshine Kids allows lower anchor use for children up to 65-80 lbs. in the Radian65SL, Radian80SL, or RadianXTSL with SuperLATCH if the vehicle was made after 9-1-05. Many Techs have asked how they can disregard the limits shown in the *SRN LATCH Manual*, which is based on recommendations provided by vehicle manufacturers.

Sunshine Kids gives the following rationale: (1) Seats with SuperLATCH pass NCAP testing up to 80 lbs. without a tether, using either lower anchors or a vehicle belt. They will provide detailed testing summaries and explanations of performance on request. (2) Vehicles made after 9-1-05 must comply with an increased strength requirement for LATCH anchors than what initially went into effect in model year 2003. Some vehicles met the stronger requirements from the start, but it is difficult to determine LATCH anchor strength for a particular vehicle.

These recommendations are being reviewed by manufacturers and the LATCH Working Group.

Recalls

Dorel infant-only seats sold with travel systems under a variety of brand and style names have been recalled because the handles may detach as screws loosen when the seat is used as a carrier outside the car, allowing the child to fall. All were made 1/6/08 to 4/6/09 and labeled "Made in China." Call 866/762-3316 for a free repair kit. Do not use the handle until it is repaired. This recall does not apply to all model numbers. Owners are advised to check with Dorel.

The webbing in top tether straps of **Dorel** Alpha Omegas, High Back Boosters, and Tourivas, made 1/1/00-9/30/01, may degrade due to abrasion. Harness webbing in High Back Boosters and Tourivas, made 3/15/02-8/01/02, may deteriorate from ultraviolet light. NHTSA regulations require Dorel to provide replacement parts although all of these seats are more than 6 years old.

Eventflo First Choice infant seats, made 1/16/09 to 9/29/09, are missing labels covering contact information and aircraft certification. Call 800/233-5921 to order labels.

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SafetyBeltSafe News

January 2010

Boosters Need to Make Belts Fit

In 2008, *SBS News* reported the research done for IIHS to create ratings of belt fit provided by boosters; the 12/22 issue of *Status Report* carried the current ratings covering most boosters on the market. A statement from Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association that all boosters met FMVSS 213 standards is true but not sufficient. Booster use is to enable kids to pass the 5-Step Test before they are able to do so without help. The key fit goals are for the lap belt to rest flat on the upper thighs and the shoulder belt, between the neck and top of the arm.

A back on a booster fills a need in vehicles without adequate head support; however, research indicates backless boosters offer comparable safety when there is built-in support. IIHS divided boosters into Best Bet (9 including combination, backless, highback models); Good Bet (6, including the same 3 types); 23 more that offered good fit at the lap but not necessarily at the shoulder; 9 with less predictable fit at the lap; and 11 not recommended. Many of the last category were combination seats, including some designed to cover all 3 phases of safety seat use. At safety seat checkups, SBS USA staff have seen such seats that fit older children well as boosters but not those just out of the harness who were the most likely to use them.

IIHS reported that their test approach has been revised for manufacturers to use it in their design approaches, for they hope all future products will fall in the top 3 categories. From a parent's viewpoint, the key is understanding how belts should fit kids, with or without a booster, especially to avoid abdominal injury. It is less important to check the list than to look at the fit of the belt in any vehicle in which kids ride to ensure the belt is in the right spots.

Using Boosters with Lap-only Safety Belts

An impressive team of researchers from IIHS and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, with Bevan Kirley as lead author, have published "Making the Most of the Worst-Case Scenario: Should Belt-Positioning Booster Seats Be Used in Lap-Belt-Only Positions?" in *Traffic Injury Prevention* this fall. The findings are based on analysis of tow-away crashes nationwide and State Farm clients from 16 U.S. states and DC. Cases of booster-age children in crashes using lap belts only, boosters with lap belts only, or boosters with lap-shoulder belts were selected and examined for significant injuries to head, trunk, and extremities.

The data on boosters used with lap belts only were very limited, influenced by both the gradually diminishing number of vehicles with lap-belts-only in the back and the consistent strictures against this use of boosters. The researchers looked at injuries, finding the data indicated better outcomes for kids who used boosters with lap-belts-only compared with lap belts alone but *not* at a statistically significant level.

Although using boosters as directed showed the best outcomes, the team reported the data should be taken into account in situations where high-weight-harness safety seats or vests were not a realistic option. No manufacturer of boosters permits this usage in written instructions, making it unlikely Technicians will suggest this. Moreover, since this circumstance is ever diminishing as vehicles wear out, it seems unnecessarily confusing to the public. Nevertheless, it is worth examining this finding in the future so manufacturers can determine if they will change their recommendations.