

SafetyBeltSafe News

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September 2010

KIDZ in Motion- Enthusiasm Rides High!

The annual national conference for child passenger safety (CPS) concluded on 8/28 with almost the same full house as on 8/26. Participants enjoyed the displays of 24 exhibitors and attended plenary and workshop sessions covering both technical and program issues. Themes that emerged included increasing weight ranges for safety seats, strong emphasis on side-impact protection, no-thread harness systems, and even the long-requested color-coded labels and instruction booklets. Evenflo noted, to help consumers, their colors match Dorel choices for the various stages of use.

As the weight limits listed on seats sky-rocket from 40 lbs. to now 65-90 lbs., be aware heavier children may be older and taller and have little vehicle room for head excursion, making tether use more critical. SBS USA notes many outgrow such products due to shoulder height long before the weight is reached. Transition to a booster must take into account behavioral maturity. Kids vary so the high weights will be a boon for the heavier 2 year old and higher strap slots/harness levels, for the older, slimmer child. The highest weight on a booster is now 125 lbs.

A unique approach taught how safety seats are made in a plenary where conference participants were assigned jobs on the pathway from raw materials to retail sales. Eric Dahle, Evenflo, acted as "ringmaster." Good sports included Ryan Hawker, Dorel, and Julie Prom, Chicco, as builders of the Evenflo Tributes produced "on the line." (Ultimately, the seats were among the prizes in the end-of-conference drawing, carefully labeled NOT to be used in a vehicle!)

From the basics of production, the conference assessed the history and performance of air bags and

changes in the LATCH arena. Mike James, Alabama State CPS Coordinator, found 1973 slides still demonstrate much of the process, despite the shift to "smart air bags" which deploy when microprocessors assess position and size of occupant and speed of collision. Originally, as SBS USA Executive Director Stephanie Tombrello recalls well, testimony on national regulatory action was needed to prevent shoulder/lap belts from being removed when air bags became mandatory as bags and belts were seen as interchangeable.

James reviewed the components of air bags and the issues for first responders as bags can deploy after a crash so long as the battery is still operative. John Hetrick took out the first patent in 1953, designing for boat safety; David Breed created the first actuator, a ball-in-tube system, which was replaced due to problems with corrosion over time. In the 1990s, frontal air bags became common and mandatory. In 2006, American Honda added an air bag to its motorcycle, a feature to keep the rider on the bike, not flying over the handlebars. Side air bags are ubiquitous but not mandatory, an effective contribution of the vehicle industry.

After the crash, some vehicles are totaled because the steering column requires replacement. However, with automatic off-switches, passenger air bags often are saved. Air bags must deploy in a quarter of the beat of a hummingbird wing, James reported, in most frontal crashes at 14 mph +. As safety belts have been equipped with pre-tensioners which remove slack before the person loads the belt, they, too, must be replaced. Remind passengers that putting one's feet on the dash is an invitation for disaster, should a crash occur.

(Continued on page 3)

Calendar

Safety Seat Checkups:

10 am-2 pm.; Technicians needed:

9 am-3 pm. Call 310/222-6860.

* **10/5:** : Glendora Marketplace,

Glendora, CA

* **10/27:** Location to be announced.

Technician Certification Class:

***10/21,22,25,26,27:** South Los Angeles, CA. Call 626/968-6555 for application. \$950 fee. \$75 Safe Kids certification fee.

* **12/9/10:** National Transportation Safety Board: Public Forum on CPS on Aircraft and in Cars. For details, go to: www.nts.gov/children Test for Webcast compatibility or attend in person.

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:

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CPSTI

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North Eastern Nevada
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RECALL

The label on Regal Lager Cybex Solution X-fix Boosters, made 2/1/10-28/10, stated *incorrectly* LATCH attachment ALONE was sufficient when unoccupied, but safety belt must be buckled, too.

Call 800/593-5522 for new label.

Are Others' CPS Standards Different?

Denise Donaldson, *Safe Ride News* editor, surveyed, both in person and online, CPS requirements worldwide, concluding all believe their approach is best. Engineers use varied ways to achieve protection. The findings in UK and Sweden, which Donaldson visited, laid the groundwork in this KIM Conference workshop.

The European Union uses rigid LATCH (ISOFIX) and defines 5 groups by weight, covering children to 12 years or 4'5" tall, but each country may add loopholes. For those in groups 0 and 0+, the 3-point harness is common. In the UK, convertible seats are uncommon; most kids are facing front by 9 months, as larger 0+ seats are too short for older babies. Foot props to avoid over-rotation are common, both rear and forward facing. Neither separate bases nor top tethers are common; vehicles lack the anchors.

Read more in November on CPS Around the World.

Status Report, 9/8/10: Focus on Buckling Up Kids

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) released its third report on booster fit with good news: most boosters provided good belt fit in most vehicles; many more fit well in all vehicles; and only a few, mostly older models, were listed as "not recommended."

Although lists can be checked on the IIHS Web site (www.iihs.org), if the child passes the 5-Step Test* in a booster, the booster works for that child in that car. Beware lap belts on tummies, shoulder belts falling off the shoulder, or belts resting too far forward on the legs.

SBS USA Board member Emilie Crown of Maryland is quoted about testing kids of any age, not stopping at age 8, for booster use; this matches with SBS USA data: of 1,715 children ages 2 to 12, only 2% of 7 and 8 year olds passed and not until age 10, at 51%, did a bare majority pass the test.

The issue carries important reports on tether use: still low with only 43% use in 1,500 safety seats in vehicles surveyed in Washington, DC. Ironically, in pickup trucks, which often have less room for the child's head excursion, only 17% use was found.

The figures are all too familiar: in 2003, a Maryland survey found 47%; in 1974, it was less than half.

*Visit www.carseat.org for the 5-Step Test

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(From page 1)

Deborah Stewart of *Safe Ride News* Publications, gave a preview of the next LATCH manual, available some months hence. Tethers are critical, but U.S. use has declined 10% to 38.7%, lower anchors, by 5% to 43.2% in LATCH-equipped vehicles. A 2007 phone survey indicated 71% of owners knew they had tether anchors but only 42% used them. Stewart reported on testing by Transport Canada, the agency similar to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), to compare using lower anchors, safety belts, or both with and without tether attachment for 3-, 6-, and 10-year-old test dummies, carried out in vehicles at 30 and 35 mph. The findings showed seats protected the dummies well.

Concluding the analysis, parents were advised to check to see if lower anchors could be used in the center location as they tend to restrain the child slightly better; to use the top tether always but to be sure it is not resting too close to a split vehicle seat back as, in one test, the tether strap slipped into the crack, adversely affecting performance; to consider using high-weight harness seats to avoid moving children to boosters until they are older; and always to make sure there is adequate room in the rear seat for the child's head to travel forward. Top tether strap use will reduce movement, but to ride down the crash, the child needs to have room to move forward. The researchers also ran tests with both the safety belt and lower anchors in use, not finding any adverse effects. Although we cannot recommend using both systems concurrently, this incorrect use is unlikely to increase a child's risk.

LATCH is popping up on more booster seats for use if it doesn't interfere with safety belt attachment, primarily to stabilize the seat when children are climbing in and to hold the booster in place when unoccupied, eliminating a deadly missile. Whether LATCH attachments need to be tight, loose, or either way varies among companies. LATCH connectors vary, too. Sunshine Kids offers SuperLATCH, rated to the same weight as the safety seat they are on in vehicles made after 9/1/05 and having "more teeth" to clutch the bars; Evenflo SureLATCH incorporates an automatic locking retractor to take up slack; and Britax has switched to "non-handed" connectors which do not require parents to switch the locations of the connectors between rear- and forward-facing installations to ensure the top of the connector is up.

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.
P.O. Box 553
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SafetyBeltSafe News

September 2010

Regulatory Change Proposed

Ray LaHood, U S Secretary of Transportation, announced Docket No. NHTSA-2010-0112 to require, in 3 years, lockable, adjustable shoulder and lap belts built into passenger seats which meet FMVSS 210 and have belt anchorages designed to handle almost 6000 lbs. of force on motorcoaches weighing more than 26,000 lbs. The change excludes large school buses and buses used as urban transit or a shuttle.

The lengthy NPRM reviews investigations, reasons, and cost-benefit analyses. Additionally, all driver's belts would be emergency locking lap/shoulder belts in motorcoaches and school buses. This raises questions about how and if to require retrofitting of current buses. The major stimulus of this NPRM is the series of deadly ejections, causing 78% of the deaths (28% in non-rollovers), in bus crashes. Shoulder/lap belts are estimated to be 77% effective in reducing bus rollover fatalities by preventing ejection.

By late August, 2010, most comments submitted supported the proposals; however, the omission of such belts on school buses and the non-inclusion of retrofitting current coaches (given their 20-year lifetimes) stirred concern.

***Comments must be received
by October 18, 2010 at
<http://www.regulations.gov>.***

New Products

New **Britax** convertible seats (5-40 lbs. rear facing, up to 70 lbs. forward facing) are Advocate 70 CS, Boulevard 70 and 70 CS, and Marathon 70. CS models have the Click Safe harness. The Roundabout 55 is certified for 5-40 lbs. rear facing, up to 55 lbs. forward facing. All except Roundabout 55 have a no-thread harness.

Dorel now has 5 models with "Air Protect" technology for side impact protection. The onBoard Air is an infant seat for 4-35 lbs. Booster Air Protect (30-100 lbs.) has a removable back and adjustable headrest. All new convertible models have a no-thread harness and are certified for 5-40 lbs. rear facing. Maximum forward facing weights vary: onSide Air and Scenera 40RF (40 lbs.), Complete Air LX (50 lbs.), and Complete Air 65 LX (65 lbs.). Convertible/combo seats (the Alpha Omega platform) cover 5-35 lbs. rear facing; maximum weights forward facing are 40 or 50 lbs., depending on the retailer. All have a no-thread harness and adjustable headrest as do the new combination seats: Adjustable Highback Booster (harness to 40 lbs., 100 lbs. as booster), Rumi Air (harness to 65 lbs., 100 lbs. as booster).

Evenflo Triumph Advance 65 is a convertible with a no-thread harness for 5-40 lbs. rear facing, up to 65 lbs. forward facing.

Learning Curve convertible seats are for 35 lbs. rear facing, up to 65 lbs. forward facing. They have a no-thread harness and removable headrest to fit in smaller cars. New models have smaller bottom rails, and LATCH attachments were moved for ease of use. Recline Convertible, a new seat, has an angle indicator showing two recline positions for infants. Rebound Convertible, with a flip-up rebound bar, is a new name for the Premier.

Recaro ProRide (replaces Signo and Como models) covers 5-35 lbs. rear facing, up to 70 lbs. forward facing. Shoulder straps and headrest are moved up or down by turning a knob. ProSport, a combination seat for up to 90 lbs. with harness, 120 lbs. as a booster, is a larger version of the Young Sport. ProBooster is certified for 30 to 120 lbs. and has an adjustable headrest.