

# SafetyBeltSafe News

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## ■ **DUI Risks to California Kids**

Last July, *SBS News* carried reports of various facets of dealing with children affected by DUI drivers, the majority of whom are riding with the affected driver. This year, the issue arises from three media-reported cases in California in under a month! Sacramento Co., Santa Barbara Co., and Tehama Co. cases involved female drivers, allegedly impaired, perhaps both a reflection of more women driving young children and the increasing incidence of female DUI risk.

In June, the death of an 11 year old and injury of a 3 year old occurred when the older child was reportedly ejected from the vehicle which overturned on the ramp of a Sacramento freeway. The family reports the crash was caused by another driver cutting off the vehicle, which was being used for newspaper delivery. If another sibling's report is correct, this may be another case of a parent not recognizing that drinking the night before can affect driving ability.

The May 22 crash in Santa Barbara left the 3 year old with a broken neck as his safety seat was not "correctly installed." The child's mother was driving her friend's vehicle after they were ejected from a restaurant as heavily intoxicated and supposed to await a taxi. The driver struck a lamppost, leading to the child's ejection.

A week later, a one year old, riding in a safety seat, was uninjured when her mother crashed in Corning, California, leading to charges of child endangerment as well as DUI. This is an important component of the process because children have no way of refusing to enter a vehicle with an impaired driver.

SBS USA urges all Child Passenger Safety Technicians (CPSTs) to include this issue in their educational messages on child passenger safety (CPS). The majority of children killed in DUI events are riding with the impaired driver. Those who work with families with substance abuse problems may not be focused on CPS nor know the substantial vehicle-related risk to children in such environments. Raising the issue in parent education classes may empower spouses or other relatives to intervene to protect children at risk as well. Supported by a CA Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) grant, SBS USA sends media releases after each report; the *Santa Barbara Independent* printed the May 22<sup>nd</sup> release.

## ■ **SAFE and GREEN**

SBS USA is happy to report that there is enthusiasm and a write-up in their current newsletter at the South Bay Environmental Services Center, serving 16 cities and some of unincorporated Los Angeles County, for the safety seat recycling program.

Heidi Heflin, for SBS USA, and Ed Bradley, Toyota Motor Sales U.S.A. (TMS), met with partners, such as Southern California Edison and The Gas Company, to share information about our goals and current success.

We invite any agency serving low-income or recent-arrival families to learn more about helping clients avoid inappropriate safety seats and find new seats so that unusable items end up at TMC Horizon, Inc, in Pomona, not in cars transporting children.

For current drop-off points, go to [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org).

## ■ **Congratulations!**

For 2013, National CPS Board recognized member Bev Kellner as CPST Instructor of the Year for her leadership in Texas. Since 1999, Texas A & M Passenger Safety Project has checked more than 20,000 safety seats, 99% showing incorrect use. Their online teaching program for child care providers has been completed by 22,000 since 2009. Kellner's team is known for outreach statewide.

## Calendar

### ■ 9/21: Safety Seat Checkup

Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, Torrance, CA. 10 am-2 pm, 9 am-3 pm for checkers. *Sponsors: CA OTS, Pomona PD, and Harbor UCLA Medical Center.* Call 310/222-6860 to register for a checkup or as a volunteer checker.

### CONFERENCES:

#### ■ 8/27-29: Kidz In Motion (KIM)

**Conference** Albuquerque, NM. Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort and Spa. Go to [www.kidzinmotion.org](http://www.kidzinmotion.org) for conference information and to register.

■ 9/8-10: Join SBS USA at the **Maine CPS Conference** in Freeport. Register at <http://www.maine.gov/dps/bhs/child-passenger-safety/index.html>

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## New Seats

■ The name of rear-facing-only **Baby Trend Inertia** (5-32 lbs.) reflects its motion-controlled base which rotates more upright in a crash, so it can ride more reclined than most in normal driving conditions; thus, any of the four angles of the base may be chosen. A dual-position angle indicator on the shell for younger/older babies, no-rethread harness, rigid LATCH, anti-rebound bar, two in-car handle positions, two sets of harness loops, and an adjustable length crotch strap are featured.

■ **Britax** has added Frontier 90 and Pinnacle 90 combination seats (25-90 lbs. w/harness, 40-120 lbs. as boosters) for children at least age 2. Both offer nine-year lifetimes, Click Tight lock-off under padding, two-position crotch straps, nine-position headrest, and LATCH for positioning in booster mode. Tether must be used from 65 lbs. in harness mode. Both may be reclined in harness mode but upright only as boosters. The optional SecureGuard to position the lap belt away from the tummy in booster mode and reduce submarining may be added. Unless auto manufacturer permits a higher weight for lower anchors, belt use is required for the Frontier, for a child at 40 lbs., and Pinnacle, at 38 lbs.

■ **Chicco** added a convertible. NextFit (5-40 lbs. rear facing, infant inlay to 11 lbs., infant insert to 22 lbs., front facing from 22-65 lbs.) provides eight-year lifetime, nine-point, bubble-indicated recline, varied for rear and forward facing, obviating use of noodles, and six-position head rest with no-rethread harness. SuperCinch LATCH attachments are labeled "Pull 1, Pull 2." The seat may be installed with an inflatable safety belt, although, in that case, the shoulder belt lock-off must not be used. The chest clip has dual fit for newborns and older babies; the crotch strap change is super-simple. Unless the vehicle manual states differently, LATCH use ends with the child at 40 lbs. No more than 3" overhang of the vehicle seat is allowed either direction.

■ **Cybex** introduced Aton 2, rear facing only, for 4-35 lbs., (infant inlay to 11 lbs; infant insert to 22 lbs.) with upright handle for car use, a height-adjustable mandatory load leg for use with the separate four-position adjustable base to reduce the Head Injury Criterion measure by 48%. When used without the base, the shoulder belt may be routed behind the shell; the seat features a belt-tensioning lock-off but lock the belt, too, if possible. If the leg doesn't fit, use without the base or obtain the base for the original Aton. A linear side-impact plastic tab on the handle is extended toward the door when seat is in an outboard location to reduce initial side-impact forces on the seat shell.

■ **Graco** has a new convertible, Ready Ride, for 4-40 lbs. facing rear, 20-50 lbs. forward facing, with LATCH use to 48 lbs. unless the vehicle manufacturer states a lower weight. A recline foot adjusts the angle, and a two-loop harness is threaded through one of three levels of harness slots, two lower choices for rear facing, two higher, for forward use.

■ A new backless booster from **Harmony** is the Transit for 30-110 lbs. The base is extra-wide for larger children. Lock the switchable retractor of the shoulder-lap belt, when possible, on the child.

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## ■ School Bus Issues

Another school bus crash, reported mid-May from South Bend, IN, shows how restraint systems on buses protect riders. Severely physically challenged children, returning from a zoo trip, were in a bus rollover, injuring a dozen, including five children, but without the “expected” severity.

Small school buses are required to have restraint systems for all occupants; large buses are not under such a federal requirement. Some states, such as California, require shoulder-lap belts on *new* buses acquired since July, 2005; therefore, all school bus manufacturers have designs that not only offer protection but do *not* reduce the numbers transported.

Yet, when the interim transportation director was asked, he offered cost as one reason, stating belts would reduce capacity, safety seats on school buses cost \$500 apiece, and that improperly used restraints caused more injury than would be prevented!!

Although school buses are the safest form of surface transportation, if your child is injured, this is of limited relief, especially now that the systems are available.

Two more restraint systems designed for use on school buses come from C E White and E-Z-On Products of Florida respectively.

The White product is called Portable Child Restraint for those 20-90 lbs. and uses the exact components of their built-in product. Attached with a cam wrap around the bus seat back, it provides an adjustable 5-point harness. When not in use, it can fold in on itself, using Velcro straps to keep it shut up and easily stored or carried.

The E-Z-On MAX Vest is meant for the person who resists buckling up. The hip connectors and tether strap adjust low behind the seat; the shoulder height adjusters are within reach but due to a two-stage method needed to release them, difficult to do from the wearer’s location. It appears to be a much-needed addition to the buckle-up menu. If the bus has no tether anchor, add the E-Z-On add-on tether anchor kit for use on a bus seat meeting FMVSS 210.

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## Tethering Tips

Published in *Status Report*, 4/25/13, and reported at Lifesavers, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) researcher Angela Eichelberger presented data backing the recommendations to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) of *Safe Ride News* and SBS USA in 2003 for a campaign to promote use of the top tether strap. A valuable component of stability and crash protection for forward-facing seats, described by Mark Zonfrillo of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia as a "second line of defense" against loose or misrouted safety belts, the usage rate is still remarkably low more than 10 years after tether anchors became mandatory in U.S. vehicles.

Eichelberger's data indicate that lack of knowledge is the largest factor in non-use. Based on interviews/observations in varied locations in four communities involving 479 drivers of vehicles, 72% of whom installed their safety seats themselves, she found 56% (39% correctly) using top tethers. Of those, 57% were using lower attachments, 35% safety belts, 7%, both. Based on these observations, users of lower attachments were twice as likely to use the top tether. Of the 31% incorrectly used: 15% were too loose; 14% had incorrect routing; 11% were twisted; and 6% had the connector in the wrong direction.

Interviews with drivers using top tethers revealed 42% considered it safer; 35% believed tethers allow for less forward motion; and 27% recognize tethers provide tighter installation, all valid reasons. Of non-users, 22% didn't know they had a tether; 8% didn't know they had an anchor; 15% didn't know how to use the system; and 10% didn't know where to hook the strap. Another 13% were too hurried. More than half, thus, focused on lack of knowledge of the system, giving CPSTs important impetus for education.

Half the non-users and even 20% of the users didn't recognize the term "top tether," and a quarter of each considered tether usage "hard." Researchers asked how users learned about tethers. Nearly half referenced the safety seat manual; only 7% consulted the vehicle manual. A CPST was listed by 27%, the Internet by 24%, and then, in the 13-14% category, friend, healthcare provider, labels on the safety seat.

While education is important and clearly needed, greater visibility of anchors in vehicles is critical. And as the May issue of *SBS News* reported, even safety-oriented parents may remove seat "equipment" they don't recognize as important.

### ■ Media Watch

In June, CNN.com highlighted the YouTube video "Worry About Yourself," where a toddler is filmed hopping into her safety seat, buckling herself in, and telling her dad, "I've got this. You just worry about yourself!"

While SBS USA doesn't recommend leaving this task to toddlers, we appreciate how these parents have made safety such a natural and expected part of their child's transportation experience!

### ■ Thank You:

State of Ohio Membership, \$6350.  
Has your state considered exploring a Group Membership?