**2021 Child Passenger Safety Week**

**FACTS and TALKING POINTS**

**GOAL/POSITIONING**

The U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s (NHTSA) primary goal for child passenger safety is to make sure all parents and caregivers are correctly using the right car seats (rear-facing car seats, forward-facing car seats, and/or booster seats) or seat belts for their children’s ages and sizes.

During Child Passenger Safety Week, scheduled for September 19-25, 2021, NHTSA encourages parents and caregivers to take some time to take a second (or third!) look at your car seats and booster seats. Make sure these car seats fit your child appropriately, and that they are correctly installed in your vehicle.

Review the following information for shocking statistics, as well as helpful free, online resources to assist you in keeping your child safe in the car.

**KEY STATISTICS**

* Car crashes are a leading cause of death for children.
* On average, two children under 13 were killed, and an estimated 351 were injured every day in 2019 while riding in cars, SUVs, pickups, and vans.
* In 2019, 608 child passenger vehicle occupants died in traffic crashes, compared to 636 in 2018. This is a 4% decrease in fatalities between 2018 and 2019, and also a 5-year low.
* In 2019, 38% of children who died while riding in passenger vehicles were unrestrained, compared to 33% in 2018.
* From 2015 to 2019, there were 3,321 children under 13 killed while riding in passenger vehicles. Fatalities decreased from 2017,2018, and 2019, a continuation of the 2016-2017 fatality decrease, which marked the first decrease since 2014.
* From 2015 to 2019, there were 1,709 “tweens” (8 to 14 years old) killed in passenger vehicles. In 2019 alone, the 8-12-year-old age group had the highest number of fatalities (229) among children in passenger vehicles, followed by the 4-to-7 age group (202).
* In 2019, more than one-third (38%) of children under 13 killed in passenger vehicles were not restrained in car seats, booster seats, or seat belts.
* In 2019, an estimated 128,000 children riding in passenger vehicles were injured in traffic crashes.
* Of the children under 13 involved in crashes in 2019, an estimated 13% were injured. The number of children injured in a crash remained steady, with an estimated 14% injured in 2017 and 2018.
* Minority children are at greater risk of being unrestrained when killed in traffic crashes: According to 2018 data from NHTSA, 62% of American Indian children killed in car crashes were unrestrained, followed by Black children (49%) and Hispanic children (40%). By comparison, white children killed were unrestrained 20% of the time.
* In 2019, 47% of unrestrained children killed in vehicle crashes were riding in vans, followed closely by SUVs (42%), and light trucks (42%). Children are safest when secured in the proper car seats or booster seats for their ages and sizes.

**Car seats work best when used correctly**

* In passenger cars, car seats reduce the risk of fatal injury by 71% for infants and by 54% for toddlers. For infants and toddlers in light trucks, the corresponding reductions were 58% and 59%, respectively.
* Most parents are confident that they have correctly installed their child’s car seat, but in most cases (46%), the seat has not been installed correctly.
* In 2017 (latest data available), among children under 5, car seats saved an estimated 312 lives. A total of 371 children could have survived if they had been buckled up 100% of the time.

**Booster seats matter, too**

* Booster seats are an essential step between car seats and seat belts. These transitional seats position the seat belt so that it fits properly over the stronger parts of your child’s body.
* According to NHTSA data, in 2017, about 20.8% of children 4 to 7 were prematurely moved to seat belts, when they should have been riding in booster seats.
* Don’t feel pressured to put your child in a seat belt too soon. If a booster seat is still appropriate for their age and size, then that is the safest place for your child to be.
* If your child is ready to use a seat belt, ensure the seat belt fits correctly: The seat belt should lie across the upper thighs and be snug across the shoulder and chest. Remember that seat belts should never rest on the stomach area or across the face.

**Child passenger safety laws**

* For the past 30 years, all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and all U.S. territories have had laws requiring children to be secured in the appropriate car seats or booster seats for their ages and sizes while riding in cars.
* Some states now require children to ride in appropriate car seats or booster seats until as old as age 9.

**Remember**

* Remember to read and carefully follow the installation instructions included with a car seat or booster seat, as well as the vehicle owner's manual. Failure to do this can lead to incorrect installation, exposing a child passenger to the risk of injury or death in a crash.
* All children under 13 should always ride bucked up in the back seat.
* Tethers should always be used for forward-facing car seats.

**Child Passenger Safety Technicians**

* National Seat Check Saturday is Sept. 25. While the COVID-19 pandemic may change the availability of certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians, they may be available in your community. These men and women will explain and demonstrate how to use car seats, booster seats, and seat belts correctly. Free of charge, the technicians will help educate consumers on choosing the correct car seat, installing that seat correctly in their vehicle, and using that seat correctly every time.
* Technicians can also discuss the importance of registering a car seat with its manufacturer, and what to expect if the seat is subject to a safety recall.
* Find out if a Technician is available in your community by visiting <https://www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/car-seats-and-booster-seats#install-inspection>.
* You can also check for virtual appointment availability in your community by selecting the option under the Car Seat Inspection finder on the website.

**Free, Online Resources**

* NHTSA hopes to empower parents and caregivers with helpful resources to make life easier. You can access the many free, online resources available at <https://www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/car-seats-and-booster-seats>.
* [Car Seat Types](https://www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/car-seats-and-booster-seats#find-right-car-seat-car-seat-types): Determine whether your child fits best in a rear-facing car seat, forward-facing car seat, booster seat, of seat belt.
* [Car Seat Recommendations](https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/documents/carseat-recommendations-for-children-by-age-size.pdf): Review NHTSA’s recommendations for the best car seat for your child’s age and size.
* [Find and Compare](https://www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/car-seats-and-booster-seats#find-right-car-seat-find-compare-seats): Find and compare car seats with NHTSA’s handy car seat finder, which also searches specific brands.
* [Ease-of-Use Evaluation](https://www.nhtsa.gov/car-seat-ease-use-ratings): This tool lets you compare how easy it is to use certain car seat features so you can make informed decisions about the right car seat. [You can also search by brand](https://www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/car-seats-and-booster-seats#search-brands).
* [Car Seat Inspection Station](https://www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/car-seats-and-booster-seats#installation-help-inspection): Certified technicians will inspect your car seat free of charge, in most cases, and show you how to correctly install and use it. Some locations also offer virtual inspections.

**For the purpose of this document, the following terms and definitions are used:**

* “Children killed/injured in car crashes” are defined as passenger car, van, pickup, and SUV passengers under 13 years old killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes; and
* “Tweens killed in car crashes” are defined as passenger car, van, pickup, and SUV passengers 8 to 12 years old killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes.