

Matt Harvey

COMMUNITY COMMENT, SEPTEMBER 4, 2012

This is Officer Matt Harvey with the California Highway Patrol for Community Comment.

Car crashes are the number one killer of children 1 to 12 years old in California. The best way to protect them in the car is to put them in the right seat, at the right time, and use it the right way.

Ahead of national Child Passenger Safety week September 16-22, let's take a look at a few ways you can keep your child safe every time your child travels.

There are so many car seat types and models, how do you know which one is right for your child? The right car seat or booster fits your child and your car, and is one you will use correctly every time you travel. Not only will your child ride as safely as possible, you will be establishing the foundation for a lifelong habit of seat belt use every time your child travels.

Effective January 1, 2012, California Law requires that a child must be properly restrained in an appropriate child safety seat in the back seat until they are 8 years old or 4'9" tall. Not only is it the law, but its much safer. Statistical data indicates that among 4 to 8-year-olds, there is stronger evidence of reduced risk of injury when a child is restrained in a child safety seat, rather than a lap and shoulder belt alone.

Sadly, most kids are not as secure in cars as they should be because their car seats are not being properly used. This misuse places children at a tremendous and unnecessary risk when traveling. Many parents and caregivers also move their children up to the next restraint type too soon. Parents and caregivers need to make certain they and their kids are buckled up properly on every trip, every time. Proper use of car seats, booster seats, and seat belts will help reduce the number of deaths and injuries occurring on California's roadways.

Here are a few tips to make sure your child is properly secured for the best possible protection. Keep infants in the back seat in rear-facing child safety seats, as long as possible up to the height or weight limit of that particular seat. When children outgrow their rear-facing seats (at least one year and 20 pounds) they should ride in a forward-facing child safety seat, in the back seat. Once the child outgrows their forward-facing seat (usually around 4 years and 40 pounds) they should ride in a booster seat. When the child outgrows their booster seat, they can use the adult seat belts in the back seat, if they fit properly.

The CHP has a spotter program in place where the public can report unrestrained children by calling 1-800-TELL-CHP. After a call has been made to the CHP, the Department sends a letter to the registered owner of the vehicle explaining what was reported, information about California law, and child safety seat informational brochures.

Since the CHP implemented the Child Passenger Safety program, thousands of employees have been trained as Child Passenger Seat technicians. Contact the nearest CHP office to set up an appointment to have your child safety seat inspected and to learn how to properly install your child safety seat from one of our specially trained Child Safety Seat technicians. This is a free service.

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