

Countywide Services Agency

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Sacramento County, Safe Kids, NHTSA, and Others Unite to Remind Parents of Importance of Child Passenger Safety *Valentine's Week to Focus on Booster Seats*

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), approximately 7,500 lives have been saved by the proper use of child restraints during the past 20 years. Yet, motor vehicle crashes still remain the number one killer of children ages 4 to 14 in America. The reason? Too often it is the improper use or non-use of child safety seats and booster seats.

That's why Sacramento County is joining with NHTSA, Safe Kids and other leaders around Valentine's Day this year to commemorate Child Passenger Safety Week (Feb. 11-17).

Sunday, February 11, 2007 will kick-off the week with the first-ever *National Seat Check Sunday* in an effort to educate parents and to ensure all child safety seats are installed properly. Certified child passenger safety technicians will provide free safety seat inspections from 9 a.m. -1 p.m. at the Mike Daugherty Chevrolet on Fulton and El Camino.

In 2005, an average of five children ages 14 and younger were killed and 640 were injured in motor vehicle crashes every single day. While 98 percent of America's infants and 93 percent of children ages 1 to 3 are regularly restrained, not enough children ages 4 through 7 are restrained *properly* for their size and age. Only 10 to 20 percent of children ages 4 through 7 who should be using booster seats to protect them are actually in them. But children ages 4 to 8 who are placed in booster seats are 59 percent less likely to be injured in a car crash than children who are restrained only by a seat belt, according to a study by Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP).

For maximum child passenger safety, parents and caregivers simply need to remember and follow the *4 Steps for Kids*:

- 1) 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 the particular seat. At a minimum, keep infants rear-facing until a minimum of age 1 and at least 20 pounds;
- 2) When children outgrow their rear-facing seats (at a minimum age 1 and at least 20 pounds) they should ride in forward-facing child safety seats, in the back seat, until they reach the upper weight or height limit of the particular seat (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds);
- 3) Once children outgrow their forward-facing seat (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds), they should ride in booster seats, in the back seat, until the vehicle seat belts fit properly. Seat belts fit properly when the lap belt lays across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest (usually at age 8 or when they are 4'9" tall);
- 4) When children outgrow their booster seats, (usually at age 8 or when they are 4'9" tall) they can use the adult seat belt in the back seat, if it fits properly (lap belt lays across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt across the chest).

"This year, during Child Passenger Safety Week, we are working hard to remind all parents, grandparents and child care providers that if their children are under 4'9", they need to be in a booster seat," said Dr Trochet. "What better way to show you love your children on Valentine's Day than to make sure they are secured properly. Make it the law in your car - it might actually save your children's lives."

For more information about Child Passenger Safety Week and the proper use of booster seats, please visit www.BoosterSeat.gov or call Sacramento County (916) 875-5869.

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