



Occupant Protection & Child Passenger Safety



Current Seat Belt Use Rate: 88.8%

OCCUPANT PROTECTION - THE FACTS

- In 2013, nearly half of the motor vehicle occupants who died in crashes were unrestrained.
- Among young adults 18 to 34 years old killed in crashes, 61 percent were completely unrestrained - the highest percentage of all age groups.
- In 2013, there were 638 children who were 12 years of age or younger killed in motor vehicle crashes. Of those fatalities, 38% were unrestrained.
- Men make up the majority of those killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes. In 2013, about 65% of the 21,132 passenger vehicle occupants killed were men. So it comes as no surprise that they wear their seat belts at a lower rate than women do – 54% of men in fatal crashes were unrestrained, compared to 41% for women.
- Of pickup truck occupants killed, 63% were not buckled up; compared to 43% of passenger car occupants. Regardless of vehicle type, seat belt use is the single most effective way to stay alive in a crash. (NHTSA, 2013).

Child Passenger Safety

Correctly using a child restraint for a young child or wearing a safety belt by older children and adults is the single most effective way to save lives and reduce serious injuries in crashes. Research has found that lap and shoulder combination safety belts, when used, reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger car occupants by 45% and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50% (NHTSA, 2011).

Effective Jan. 1, 2015, children ages 5 and younger must use a booster seat when in a motor vehicle.

"In Florida, we lagged behind the rest of the country when it came to the seat belt law," says Florida Safety Council spokesman Glenn Victor. Florida was one of two states without a booster seat law. "It is really hard to transition a child right from a baby car seat to a seat belt. There comes a time when a child is too big for a car seat but is not big enough for a regular seat with a seat belt."



The Safe Kids and Child Advocacy Program coordinator at Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida, Sally Kreuzscher, says she's happy to see the new rule, but she says it isn't enough. Children grow at a variety of rates and age should not be the criteria, she explains.

"The law is not as strict as we wanted it," Kreuzscher says. **"It should be until they are 4 feet, 9 inches and between 80 and 100 pounds. The new law only has it until their sixth birthday, and some 6-year-olds are not mature enough to sit without a booster seat."**

THE FACTS

- Seat belts don't fit children properly until they are at least 4 feet, 9 inches tall and weigh between 80 and 100 pounds.
- Vehicle crashes are the second-leading cause of death for children ages 4 to 10.
- Some 340 children ages 4 to 10 died in motor vehicle crashes in 2012. One-third of these children were riding without a restraint that could have saved their lives.
- Children who should be in booster seats but wear only seat belts are at risk of severe abdominal, head and spinal injuries in the event of a crash.
- Booster seats can reduce the risk of serious injury by 45 percent compared to seat belts alone.
- Seven in 10 parents do not know that a child should be at least 57 inches (4 feet, 9 inches) tall to ride in a car using a seat belt without a booster seat, according to a Safe Kids Worldwide survey of 1,000 parents of children ages 4 to 10.
- The study revealed 9 out of 10 parents move their children from booster seat to seat belt before their children are big enough.

SOURCE: Safe Kids

Children no longer need booster seats when they can pass the following Safety Belt Fit Test:

- The child's knees should bend at the edge of the seat when his or her back and bottom are against the vehicle seat back;
- The vehicle lap belt should fit across the upper thighs; and
- The shoulder belt should fit across the shoulder and chest. Children are usually between 8 and 12 years old when the seat belt fits them properly.

Make it a rule that kids younger than 13 ride like a VIP – in the back. This is the safest place for preteens and younger children to sit.

When carpooling, make sure you have enough seating positions and booster seats for every child in your car and that kids enter and exit curbside.

- See more at: <http://www.safekids.org/safetytips>