

# Pointers For Parents

## Parents Can Protect Their Children With Belt-Positioning Booster Seats

(NAPSA)—Keeping families on the road to safety are efforts to increase the use of safety seats in cars. According to the National SAFE KIDS Campaign, motor vehicle occupant injury is the leading cause of injury-related death among children. Although great strides are being made to bring the numbers down, a recently published report by the Campaign shows that the motor vehicle death rate for children ages five to nine declined by only one percent from 1987 to 2000. This is especially alarming when compared to the 24 percent decline achieved for the one to four age group during that same time.

“Our research indicates that many parents still don’t understand the importance of booster seat use,” said Heather Paul, Ph.D., executive director for the National SAFE KIDS Campaign. “We believe a major factor contributing to stagnant death and injury rates for five-to-nine-year-olds is the fact that only 19 percent of children who should use belt-positioning booster seats are actually using them.”

Dr. Paul explains that adult safety belts do not adequately protect most children until they are at least eight years old.

“Usually, children under age eight do not have bodies large enough to properly fit into a safety belt,” said Dr. Paul.

“If children graduate to safety belts too early, they can be at increased risk for head, abdominal and spinal cord injuries in a crash.”

The Campaign recommends



**Children should ride in the back seat and in a car seat or booster seat until at least eight years old.**

that children who weigh more than 40 pounds use booster seats until vehicle safety belts alone fit correctly, which is usually around age eight. A booster helps position the lap belt low on a child’s strong hips and upper thighs instead of allowing it to ride up onto the soft abdomen. In a crash, if the lap belt is too high, it can cause serious internal injury.

The higher seating position and belt adjustment features that the booster seat provides also let the shoulder belt rest snugly across a child’s chest and shoulder area, rather than the neck or chin. Children with incorrectly fitting shoulder belts may place the shoulder belt behind their backs or under their arms, leading to increased likelihood of injury.

In addition to the use of booster seats, the Campaign also stresses that the back seat is generally the safest place for a child to ride.

More than 1,600 children ages 14 and under die in motor vehicle

crashes each year and an estimated 228,000 children are injured as occupants in motor vehicle-related crashes. Although most parents believe they are correctly protecting their children, nearly one-third of kids use the wrong restraints for their ages and sizes and 14 percent of children ride completely unrestrained.

To address this problem, General Motors works with the National SAFE KIDS Campaign on a program titled, “SAFE KIDS BUCKLE UP.” The UAW-GM Center for Human Resources is also a partner. The program educates parents and caregivers about the proper installation and use of child safety seats and safety belts. A public awareness campaign and efforts to improve child occupant protection laws, combined with child safety seat inspections throughout the country, are helping to bring about important changes. SAFE KIDS coalitions have inspected over 400,000 child safety seats for proper installation as part of this program.

“GM takes the issue of child passenger safety very seriously,” said Artie Martin, GM staff project engineer and nationally recognized industry authority on child passenger safety. “From designing safety into our vehicles to becoming certified as safety seat technicians, people at GM are doing their part to help make sure children ride safely.”

For more information on booster seats or other issues of child passenger safety, go to [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org) or [www.gmability.com](http://www.gmability.com).