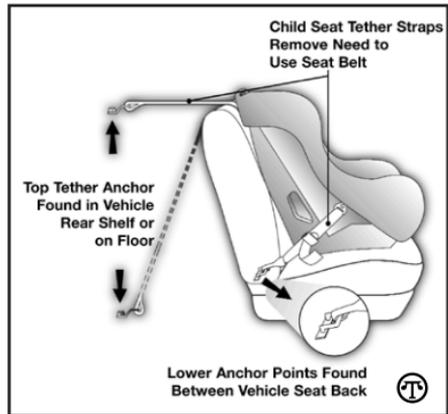


LATCH Makes Safety Seat Installation Easier, But Inspections Still Needed

(NAPSA)—A new system designed to make installing child safety seats easier is required for nearly all passenger vehicles and child safety seats manufactured beginning September 1, 2002. The new system, LATCH (Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children), allows child safety seats to be installed without using the vehicle's seat belt system. LATCH does not solve all safety seat misuses, however, and to best protect children in motor vehicles, parents should have their children's safety seats inspected by a certified inspector.

Help is available through SEATCHECK, a safety program of the Chrysler Group. Designed to make parents aware of the importance of having their children's child safety seats inspected for proper installation and fit, SEATCHECK also directs parents to child safety seat inspection locations nationwide through a toll-free hotline (1-866-SEAT-CHECK or 1-866-732-8243) and Web site (www.seatcheck.org). The toll-free hotline and Web site are available in English and Spanish.

LATCH combines metal anchors found between the vehicle's back seat cushions with buckles or hooks on the child safety seats. The two parts snap together to secure the child safety seat to the vehicle seat. In addition, vehicles have top anchor points that connect to a child safety seat's top tether strap. Together, these components are intended to make safety seat installation easier for parents.



The new system addresses two of the most common child safety seat misuses: The safety seat is not tightly fitted into the vehicle seat and the seat belt is not properly locked into place. There are other very important factors to consider, however, that LATCH does not resolve. These mistakes can cause serious injury or death to a child in the event of a crash. These mistakes include: the safety seat harness straps are too loose; the safety seat is facing the wrong direction in the vehicle; or the child is not the appropriate height, weight and/or age for the safety seat.

It is important to note that child safety seats without LATCH—when installed and used correctly—continue to offer protection equal to that of LATCH-equipped seats. These safety seats can continue to be installed using the vehicle's seat belt system, even in LATCH-equipped vehicles. The best protection parents can offer a child is having their safety seats inspected by a certified technician.