

ROAD TO SAFETY

Program Keeps Kids On Track For Vehicle Safety

(NAPSA)—Today's preteens are part of the first generation of kids to use car seats, booster seats and seat belts consistently, and a new program wants to keep them on track as the "Safest Generation" when it comes to vehicle safety.

Safe Kids USA's Safest Generation program is designed to help children ages 11 and 12 make good safety decisions when they're riding in vehicles.

"Our research showed that often families understand safe behavior, but they don't always follow through on what they know," said Lorrie Walker, technical and training manager for Safe Kids USA. "Preteens ages 11 and 12 are facing some very difficult safety decisions, and we want to give them the tools to make responsible choices as they become more independent."

Nearly 50 percent of parents surveyed said that it was OK for preteens ages 11 and 12 to sit in the front seat of a vehicle. However, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), sitting in a rear seat instead of the front seat reduces fatal injury risk among children 12 and younger by 36 percent.

In small group conversations, parents justified allowing preteens to sit up front by saying their kids help them navigate or like to control the radio. However, NHTSA recommends that children stay properly restrained in a backseat until they are 13 years old.

The program uses hands-on activities to help preteens get the right safety belt fit, learn about the newest technology, debunk vehicle safety myths and learn



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how to make decisions that could be the difference between life or death in the event of a crash.

There's also a seminar for parents to remind them to be a good safety role model whenever they ride in a vehicle and to help make sure preteens are safe when riding with friends and neighbors.

The Safest Generation is the latest program undertaken by Safe Kids Buckle Up, a partnership between Safe Kids USA, General Motors and Chevrolet that has been teaching families how to keep kids safer in and around vehicles for more than a decade. The program has inspected 1 million car seats for proper installation and presented educational programs such as Spot the Tot, Never Leave Your Child Alone and the Cub Scouts Automotive Safety Patch, covering many of the vehicle safety needs for children ages 0 to 12.

More information and activities for preteens can be found on Safestgeneration.com and usa.safekids.org.