



MEDIA RELEASE

OHIO TRAFFIC SAFETY OFFICE

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ODPS Reminds Parents and Caregivers to Review Child Safety Seat Protocols

-New Booster Seat Law Takes Effect October 7 -

(COLUMBUS) – Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children age 3 to 6 and 8 to 14. In 2007, 6,532 passenger vehicle occupants 14 and younger were involved in fatal crashes around the nation. That’s why the Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS) is urging all parents and caregivers to review child safety seat protocols. As part of Child Passenger Safety Week (Sept. 12-18), the Department’s Ohio Traffic Safety Office is also reminding everyone that Ohio’s new booster seat law takes effect Oct. 7.

“It’s the responsibility of every parent and caregiver out there to make sure their children are safely restrained – every trip, every time,” said ODPS Director Henry Guzmán. “We are urging everyone to get their child safety seats inspected, and make sure you are aware of all child passenger safety laws. When it comes to the safety of a child, there is no room for mistakes.”

In 2007, among children under 5, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimated 358 lives were saved from the use of child safety seats and booster seats. If all children under the age of 5 were restrained, an additional 71 children would have been saved. In Ohio, in 2008, just over half of the children ages 0 to 5 killed in car crashes were restrained.

For maximum child passenger safety, parents and caregivers should refer to the following *4 Steps for Kids* guidelines for determining which restraint system is best suited to protect children based on age and size:

- 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 at least age 1 and at least 20 pounds.
- When children outgrow their rear-facing seats (at least 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).

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- Once children outgrow their forward-facing seats (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).
- **Ohio law recently changed and every child under 8 years old must ride in a booster seat or other appropriate child safety seat unless the child is 4'9" or taller. This law takes effect Oct. 7, 2009, with a six-month warning period. Full enforcement will begin April 7, 2010.**
- When children outgrow their booster seats, (usually at age 8 or when they are 4'9" tall) they can use the adult seat belts in the back seat, if they fit properly (lap belt lays across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest).
- Remember: All children younger than 13 should ride in the back seat.

For more information on Child Passenger Safety Week, a national effort to remind parents and caregivers of the lifesaving effect child safety seats have in protecting young children, please visit www.nhtsa.gov/cps.

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ODPS works to reduce deaths and injuries and improve the quality of life for Ohioans through the coordinated efforts of its Divisions, which include the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, Ohio State Highway Patrol, Division of Emergency Medical Services and the Ohio Traffic Safety Office (OTSO). The Ohio State Highway Patrol enforces traffic laws and OTSO funds the efforts of OVI Task Forces and other grants for law enforcement to combat impaired and unsafe driving and increase seat belt use. OTSO also promotes educational programs, coalition-building efforts and campaigns for highway safety.