



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MAJORITY OF CHILD CAR SEATS USED INCORRECTLY IN MINNESOTA

*Parents Encouraged to Check Restraints, Learn More During
National Child Passenger Safety Week*

ST. PAUL — The Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) reports three out of every four child restraints are used incorrectly — meaning children are riding in the wrong restraint or the restraint it is not properly secured. In the last five years, 2003–2007, 48 vehicle occupants under age 10 were killed on Minnesota roads and more than two-thirds of the victims were not in child restraints, or the restraint was used improperly.

To encourage proper child restraint use, DPS is urging parents to re-educate themselves about child passenger safety seat use during National Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Week, which runs through Saturday, September 27.

“Families have busy, active schedules, but it is so important that parents take the time to ensure their children are seated and correctly restrained in a vehicle,” says Cheri Marti, director of DPS Office of Traffic Safety.

Marti says child restraints are effective and necessary. Since 1991, a majority — 86 percent — of around 35,000 children that were properly restrained and involved in traffic crashes were not injured and 13 percent sustained only minor injuries.

Marti says a major issue with child passenger safety is that parents are unaware of the restraint steps a child should progress through as they grow: rear-facing infant seats, forward-facing toddler seats, booster seats, and seat belts.

The most commonly ignored restraint is a booster seat — seat lifts that help seat belts fit children properly. In Minnesota, only 30 percent of 4–8 year-olds use boosters. Poor seat belt fit can contribute to serious injury, ejection and death in traffic crashes. Booster seats are recommended for children 4–8 years-old and under 4-feet 9-inches.

Marti says a sign that a seat belt does not fit properly and a booster is needed is if the child wraps the shoulder belt behind them to avoid the belt rubbing against their neck.

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The most common child passenger safety mistakes are:

- Turning a child from a rear-facing restraint to a forward-facing restraint too soon.
- Restraint is not secured tight enough — it should not shift more than one inch side-to-side or out from the seat.
- Harness on the child is not tight enough — if you can pinch harness material, it's too loose.
- Retainer clip is up too high or too low — should be at the child's armpit level.
- The child is in the wrong restraint — don't rush your child into a seat belt.

Parents are encouraged to visit the state's www.buckleupkids.state.mn.us website to download fact sheets and a child safety chart that identifies the proper seat for children as they grow and age. Also available online is the "Buckle Up Kids" and "Don't Skip a Step" brochures that provide detail on how to properly secure a child in a vehicle.

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Editor's Note: *To schedule an interview with a CPS expert in your area or find up-coming CPS clinics to attend, visit www.buckleupkids.state.mn.us/ots, or call/email Nathan.bowie@state.mn.us or Lisa.husom@state.mn.us.*

A CPS TV spot is also available, email Nathan.bowie@state.mn.us.

View the spot here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yW0vELt3hY>

Radio PSA scripts and pre-recorded spots are available by emailing Nathan.bowie@state.mn.us or lisa.husom@state.mn.us.