

Governor's Office of Highway Safety

NEWS RELEASE
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GEORGIA PREPARES FOR NEW BOOSTER SEAT LAW: **Parents and Caregivers Urged to Review New Rules**

(ATLANTA) According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), motor vehicle crashes are still the leading cause of death for children from 3 to 14 years old. In 2009 alone, car crashes in Georgia claimed the lives of 909 people age 5 and above, but also 10 young lives of passengers age 4 and below. In 2008, 1,437 children ages infant to 14 were killed in traffic crashes across the country.

"The good news is Georgia has added one more level of protection to keep our precious cargo safe," said Director Harris Blackwood of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS). "Because child safety seats are truly a lifesaving device when installed and buckled properly, a new law going into effect on July 1st now requires children to remain in a booster seat up to age 8."

That's why GOHS is travelling all over the state during the week **before** July 1st to give parents and caregivers one more reminder about the new law before it goes into effect. "We usually take the chance to highlight child passenger safety in September during the national safety week campaign, but this year, we have a more urgent message for parents and caregivers that just couldn't wait," said GOHS Director Blackwood. "Whether it's a short trip to the grocery store or a road trip for summer vacation, children in Georgia, including 6 and 7-year-olds, will still need to be properly buckled in a booster seat.

The new law does have a **few** exceptions. Overall, it requires all children under 8 to be in an appropriate restraint while travelling in a vehicle. The only exemption is if the child is 4'9" tall or above. A child under 8 years of age and weighing at least 40 pounds is NOT exempt from the law. However, they may use a lap belt only instead of a booster seat if the following conditions occur: The vehicle is not equipped with lap and shoulder belts; or excluding the driver's seat, all seating positions with lap and shoulder belts are being used to restrain other children.

Those on the front line of traffic crashes here in Georgia know firsthand what the consequences of not properly buckling a child into the correct type of safety seat can be. In fact, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta has reported that in the last four years, 95 percent of the 6 to 8-year-old patients they saw for injuries resulting from a traffic crash were improperly restrained.

Traffic enforcement officers know child safety seats and booster seats save lives because they offer the best protection for children in the event of a crash. NHTSA research shows that during the past 30 years, an estimated 8,959 children's lives were saved by child restraints from 1975 through 2008.

Unfortunately, nearly three-out-of-four child safety seats are not used properly nationwide, and that puts young children at unnecessary risk of being killed or injured. "As more families hit the road for summer vacation while school is out, we want to make sure all Georgia children return happy and healthy for the coming school year," said GOHS Director Blackwood. "This new law is making sure our elementary-age kids get the extra protection they deserve."

Because there is no room for mistakes when dealing with the safety of a child, Director Blackwood wants to remind all parents of the following 4 Steps For Kids guidelines for determining which restraint system is best suited to protect children based on age and size:

(MORE MORE MORE)

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Nathan Deal, Governor

Harris Blackwood, Director

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(PAGE TWO)

4 Steps for Kids

- 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 a minimum of age 1 and at least 20 pounds;
- When children outgrow their rear-facing seats (at a minimum 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);
- Once children outgrow their forward-facing seat (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);
- When children outgrow their booster seats, (usually at age 8 or when they are 4'9" tall) they can use the adult seat belt in the back seat, if it fits properly (lap belt lays across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt across the chest).

And remember...all children under the age of 13 should ride in the backseat. The facts cannot be ignored—**booster and child safety seats save lives**. When used correctly in the second row, child safety seats are at least 60-percent effective in preventing fatalities! And restraint use for children transported by belted drivers continues to be higher than those driven by unbelted drivers. That's why all fifty states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, have laws requiring children to be restrained in child safety seats in motor vehicles.

"We can teach our kids to be responsible drivers and in turn, make sure the next generation is around to have kids of their own," said Director Blackwood. "But the only way they can grow up is to do everything we can to keep them safe. That includes keeping them in booster seats until the age of 8 and doing whatever is in our power to prevent tragedy."

To find a child safety seat inspection station nearest you, visit www.nhtsa.gov/carseatcheck. Certified technicians will inspect your child safety seat and show you how to correctly install and use it. For details about highway safety programs in your community, visit our website at www.gahighwaysafety.org

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