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OPD Will Check For Car Seats During *Child Passenger Safety Week*: Free Resources to Ensure Children's Safety

Oakland, CA— Every day in America, too many children ride in car seats that are not safe. Some seats have been installed incorrectly, or children are riding in the wrong car seats for their ages and sizes. Even worse, many other children ride while completely unbuckled. The Oakland Police Department is partnering with NHTSA to sponsor Child Passenger Safety Week, from September 17 through 23. The campaign will help parents, grandparents and caregivers make sure their children ride as safely as possible - every trip, every time.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), two out of three car seats are not installed or used correctly. Motor vehicle crashes are a leading killer of children, and fatalities are on the rise. Every 33 seconds in 2015, a child under 13 was involved in a crash. Using car seats that are age- and size-appropriate is the best way to keep your children safe. Car seats, booster seats, and seat belts can make all the difference.

In 2015, 248 children under the age of 5 survived car accidents because they were riding in car seats. Car seats matter, and having the right car seat installed and used the right way is critical. Too often, parents move their children to the front seat too soon, which increases the risk of injury and death. The safest place for all kids under 13 is in the back seat.

NHTSA reports that in 2015, about 25.8 percent of children 4 to 7 who should be riding in booster seats were prematurely moved to seat belts, and 11.6 percent were unbuckled altogether.

It's our job to keep our children safe, so make it a point to have your car seats checked. Make certain that they're installed correctly, that your kids are in the right kind of seats, and that they are buckled in correctly. Even if you think your child is safe, check again. Be sure that your child is the safest he or she can be while traveling.

It's the Law

Remember, California law requires that any child under the age of 2:

- ride in a rear-facing car seat (unless the child weighs 40 or more pounds OR is 40 or more inches tall).
- be secured in a manner that complies with the height and weight limits specified by the manufacturer of the car seat.

California law also requires that children under 8 be secured in a car seat or booster seat in the back seat.

Children who are 8 years old OR are at least 4'9" tall:

- *may* be secured by a booster seat, but
- at the very least, *must* be secured by a safety belt. Learn more at: <https://www.chp.ca.gov/programs-services/programs/child-safety-seats/child-safety-seat-videos>

When Can a Child Graduate to a Booster Seat?

- California law does not address graduation time from a five- point harness to a booster seat. In the interest of safety, do not rush to move a child into a booster seat before they're ready. Each time you "graduate" your child to the next seat, there's a reduction in the level of protection for your child. Keep your child in each stage for as long as possible.
- Children are ready for a booster seat when they have outgrown the weight or height limit of their forward-facing harnesses. Typically, that means they weigh between 40 and 65 pounds. Read the forward-facing car seat's owner's manual to determine height and weight limits, and keep your child in a harnessed seat for as long as possible.
- Children are not ready for adult safety belts until they are at least 4'9" tall and between 8 and 12 years old.

Safety belts are designed for 165-pound male adults, so it's no wonder that research shows poorly fitting adult belts can injure children. (California Vehicle Code Section 27360 and Section 27363.)

Take Action/Learn More

Always remember to register your car seat and booster seat with the car seat manufacturer so you can be notified in the event of a recall.

View more information on car seat safety and locate a certified child passenger safety technician at www.nhtsa.gov/carseat.

NHTSA Trained Child Safety Seat Technicians are available by appointment with law enforcement agencies, health providers, insurance companies and many local businesses. Go to the Safe Kids Worldwide website (<https://www.safekids.org>) for more information.

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