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National Child Passenger Safety Week, Sept 15-21

SEPTEMBER 15TH 2013 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Submitted by

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Jefferson City, Missouri - The Missouri State Highway Patrol joins the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the Ad Council, and other safety advocates to commemorate National Child Passenger Safety Week (September 15-21, 2013).

The primary goal of this program is to remind all parents and other adults responsible for children traveling in motor vehicles of the importance of child safety seats and seat belts. Every year, children suffer needless injuries. Preliminary statistics indicate that in 2012, 17 children under the age of eight were killed in traffic crashes, and another 1,743 were injured.

Troopers issued citations to 2,362 drivers who failed to secure children less than eight years old in a child restraint/booster seat in 2012. Troopers issued citations to an additional 572 drivers who failed to secure a child 80 pounds or more or over 4'9" in a seat belt in 2012.

Troopers investigate traffic crashes every day. Nothing is more disturbing than a traffic crash that includes a child being hurt or killed. Child safety seats protect children. The Missouri State Highway Patrol encourages every driver to make sure child passengers in their vehicles are restrained properly.

Missouri law states:

* Children less than four years old are required to use an appropriate child passenger restraint system. [The fine for not complying with the law is \$50.]

* Children less than 40 pounds, regardless of age, must be secured in a child passenger restraint system appropriate for the child. [The fine for not complying with the law is \$50.]

* Children ages four to eight years old who weigh at least 40 pounds, but less

than 80 pounds, and are under 4'9" tall, must be secured in a child passenger restraint system or booster seat appropriate for that child. [The fine for not complying with the law is \$50.]

* Children ages eight through 15 must wear seat belts regardless of the type of vehicle in which they are riding or where they are seated (front or back). Like the child restraint law, this is a primary law, meaning you can be pulled over by law enforcement for noncompliance. The fine is \$10.

* Persons less than 18 years of age operating or riding in trucks (regardless of gross weight for which licensed) must wear seat belts.

*No person under age 18 is allowed to ride in the unenclosed bed of a truck with a licensed gross weight of less than 12,000 pounds on lettered highways, federal, state maintained highways, and within city limits. There are exemptions for agricultural purposes, special events, and parades.

* It is the driver's responsibility to ensure passengers under the age of 16 are buckled up safely. Those 16 and over are responsible for themselves.

There are many styles of child safety seats from which parents may choose. Infant seats are designed for children up to 22-30 pounds depending on the seat manufacturer. This type of seat should be placed into a vehicle so the infant faces rearward in a semi-reclined position. It is important to remember rear-facing infant seats should NOT be used in a front passenger seat equipped with an active air bag. If deployed, an air bag could hit the infant seat and injure or kill the baby. Airbag or not, the back seat is the safest place for a child.

Most convertible child safety seats are designed for children from five pounds up to 40 - 80 pounds, depending on the manufacturer. Like all seats, they have manufacturer's labels on the side indicating the maximum height and weight of the seat. They recline and face rearward in an infant position, and convert to sit upright and face forward for the toddler position. Most newer convertible seats can hold children who weigh up to 35 pounds in the rear-facing position. NHTSA recommends keeping children rear facing until they reach the maximum height and weight for the car seat. The child can then be turned around forward facing.

Booster seats are designed for children who have outgrown other safety seats

and must be used with an adult lap and shoulder belt. Lap/shoulder belts are designed for children who are at least 4' 9" tall or 80 or more pounds. Make sure the lap belt stays low and snug across the lower hip/upper thigh area, and the shoulder belt does not cross the face or the neck.

“Missouri's child safety seat survey revealed that when drivers are not buckled up, 28 percent of children were not restrained either. Parents, your child's safety begins with you. Please teach your children the value of using seat belts by setting the example. Place your child in the proper restraint or safety seat every time they ride in a vehicle,” said Colonel Ron Replogle, superintendent of the Missouri State Highway Patrol. “It’s a habit that could one day save their life.”

For safety reasons, the Missouri State Highway Patrol discourages the purchase of child safety seats at a garage sale. Also, a safety seat that has been in a vehicle during a traffic crash should be replaced.

There is no one "safest" child safety seat. Use the one that fits your child, fits in your vehicles correctly, and one that you will use every trip, every time. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, three out of four child safety seats are installed improperly. Car seat inspection stations are located all over Missouri. For more information about the proper use of child restraint systems or to schedule a child safety seat inspection, contact the nearest Missouri State Highway Patrol troop headquarters and ask for the public information and education officer, or visit www.seatcheck.org.

LAST UPDATED ON SEPTEMBER 15TH 2013 BY DEE LOFLIN

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