

NEED FOR BOOSTER SEATS FOR CHILDREN BETWEEN AGE 4 AND 10.

Position Statement

WHEREAS, it has been documented that between 40% and 50% of 4 – to 8 – year-old children killed in motor vehicle crashes are totally unrestrained.

WHEREAS, not even half of all states have child passenger restraint laws that require the use of child restraints, including booster seats, by children over age four.

WHEREAS, it has been documented that 84% of the restrained 4 – 8 year – old children have been inappropriately restrained in adult belts.

WHEREAS, even though using an adult restraint system is better than using no restraint system it is evident that passenger car seats and restraint systems are designed to accommodate adults and are not the optimal restraint suitable for children.

WHEREAS, for children ages 4 to 8 years, use of belt-positioning booster seats reduces the risk of injury by 59% compared to use of adult belts alone.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Association for the Advancement of Automotive Medicine urges the prompt passage of statewide mandatory child restraint use laws that include children over age 4.

Adopted: September, 2003

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Background information

Motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of death for children over age 1 in the United States. Despite significant increases in restraint use for children over the *past 25* years, many children are not restrained properly for their age. This problem is particularly prevalent among children 4 to 8 years old. These children have typically outgrown a forward-facing convertible child restraint, yet are not big enough to use the vehicle seat belt properly. Current guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Highway Safety Administration (NHTSA) recommend that children from 40 to 80 lbs and up to 57 inches in height should use a belt positioning booster seat. [1], [2], [3], [4], [6].

Although more than a dozen states have ratified laws that require booster seats for children older than 4 years, most states continue to have child restraint laws that only cover children through age 4 years. [5]

The Partners for Child Passenger Safety (State Farm Insurance Company and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia) determined that the odds of injury, adjusting for child, driver, crash, and vehicle characteristics, were 59% lower for children aged 4 to 7 years in belt positioning boosters than in seat belts. [5]

References:

[1] Fatal Analysis System, April 2003.

[2] Anton's Law, Child Safety Enhancement Act of 2002.

[3] D.R. Durbin, M.J. Kallan, F.K. Winston, Partners for Child Passenger Safety (PCPS), "Trends in Booster Seat Use Among Young Children in Crashes, Pediatrics vol. 108 No.6 December 2001 pp. e109.

[4] Commentary, Booster Seats for Children: Closing the Gap Between Science and Public Policy in the United States, Traffic Injury Prevention (Vol.4, issue 1, pp. 5-8).

[5] Durbin DR, Elliott M, Winston FK. Belt-positioning Booster Seats and Reduction in Risk of Injury Among Children in Vehicle Crashes. JAMA 2003 Jun 4; 289(21): 2835-40.

[6] US Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Traffic Safety Facts 2001 – Children.

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