

# Safety at Work & Home - Children's Safety Seats

Too often you are likely to see children riding in cars with out benefit of seatbelts. Children riding in parents arms or playing in the backseat are at great risk. Though there should not be any children riding around in pest control vehicles, we are as concerned about the well being of your family as we are of you! Children's safety is too important an issue to ignore.

In California during 1995, 59 children under the age of four (4) were killed when the vehicle they were riding in were involved in an accident. According to the CHP, 50% of these children were not in safety seats or they were in safety seats that were being used improperly.

According to the CHP: "We've heard all the excuses; the seats are a hassle; they take too long to use; they're uncomfortable for the child, or they're unnecessary on a short trip. But the bottom line is , there is no excuse worth a tragic death or avoidable injury. Traffic collisions do happen but taking proper precautions can minimize the awful consequences."

California law, 27360(a) VC, requires a child safety seat for every child under the age of 4 years regardless of weight, or who weighs less than 40 pounds regardless of age. The CHP has vigorously enforced the child's safety seat law since it went into effect in 1983. In 1995 alone, the CHP issued more than 15,000 citations statewide for safety seat violations.

CHP advises: "Parents should carefully read and follow all instructions that come with their child's safety seat, and also check the owner's manual of the vehicle they are installing it to, ensuring it improperly attached to the car's adult safety belt. An improperly installed safety seat is little or no protection in a traffic collision."

Children's safety seats should never be installed in front seats which have air bags. Even small children who are older than four years and weigh much more than 40 pounds can be at risk from an air bag. The force of the airbag hitting a child's safety seat or a young child can be life threatening.

What is good for the children, is also good for the adults, so be sure to buckle your own lap/shoulder belt. During an accident, restraints keep people in their own seats and ensure they do not slam into other interior surfaces. You are also setting a good example for your children when you wear your seatbelt.

Parents with babies that require constant attention or have special needs, should avoid traveling alone with their children for two reasons. One, there is an increased risk of an accident due to the distraction of a driver who is constantly paying attention to a baby instead of the road. The second reason is, that if the vehicle has a passenger air bag, putting an infant's safety seat (rear facing or forward facing) would put it the path of the bag during an accident. The chances of seriously injuring the baby would be very high.

Keeping child safety in mind is a very important task that we all face each day. Remember the important task of ensuring our children are properly secured in their vehicles during a short or long family outing. We hope this reminds all of us who are parents, soon to become parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc., the importance of our child safety seat law.

*adapted from August 1996 Sacramento Chapter ASSE Safety Line*