

A New Texas Booster Seat Law Could Help Reduce Injury Risk to Children by 59 Percent

Safe Kids San Angelo offers additional child passenger safety tips to parents

San Angelo – On September 1, 2009 new state laws become in effect. Safe Kids San Angelo was proud to support this bill that will create important safety standards to keep the children of Texas safer while riding in vehicles.

“For kids ages 2 to 14, motor vehicle crashes are still the number one killer of kids in the United States,” says Catie Wiedenhofer, Safe Kids San Angelo coordinator. “We support Texas’s new booster seat law because young children who are too small for the adult seat belt and who are properly restrained in a booster seat are significantly less likely to be killed or injured in motor vehicle crashes than children who are unrestrained.”

The new law requires children under the age of eight and 4’9” to be secured in a child passenger safety system.

“As your child gets bigger, they might think they’re too old for a booster seat,” said Wiedenhofer “But the new law states all children under eight must be properly secured in a car seat or booster seat in Texas. For children ages 4 to 7, booster seats have been shown to reduce injury risk by 59 percent compared to just safety belts alone.”

Seat belts are designed to fit adults, not children. A booster seat raises a child up so that the adult seat belt fits correctly and offers more protection in case of a crash. Safe Kids San Angelo recommends parents keep their children in booster seats, even after they surpass the requirements of this new law, until they can pass the “Safety Belt Fit Test.” Most children are about 4’9” tall and 80 to 100 pounds before the adult seat belt fits them correctly.

To determine if a child needs a booster seat, follow the steps for the Safety Belt Fit Test:

1. Have your child sit in a back seat with their bottom and back against the vehicle’s seat back. Do the child’s knees bend at the seat’s edge? If yes, go on. If not, the child must stay in a booster seat.
2. Buckle the seat belt. Does the lap belt stay low on the hips? If yes, go on. If it rests on the stomach, the child must stay in a booster seat.
3. Look at the shoulder belt. Does it lay on the collarbone and shoulder? If yes, go on. If it’s on the face or neck, the child must remain in a booster seat. Never put the shoulder belt under the child’s arm or behind the child’s back. Do not allow children to play with the shoulder portion of a seat belt. Treat it like any cord.
4. Can the child maintain the correct seating position with the shoulder belt on the shoulder and the lap belt low across the hips? If yes, the child has passed the Safety Belt Fit Test. If no, the child should return to a booster seat and re-test in a month.

Safe Kids San Angelo applauds the Texas State Legislature in their passage of this booster seat law and encourages parents to call 325-947-6130 or visit www.usa.safekids.org to learn more about booster seats and how to keep their kids safe while riding in vehicles.

The Safe Kids Buckle Up Program is the comprehensive child passenger safety program of Safe Kids USA in partnership with General Motors. This program has been inspecting child safety seats for correct installation and educating families about how to be safer in and around vehicles since 1997. Over the past 12 years, Safe Kids has held approximately 52,000 vehicle safety events for families and checked more than a million car seats for proper installation. The program has also donated more than 367,000 child safety seats to families in

need. In addition, the program has created innovative activities that go beyond crash protection by educating families on other dangers children face in and around vehicles such as hyperthermia and back-over/roll-over risks.

Safe Kids San Angelo works to prevent accidental childhood injury, the leading killer of children 14 and under. Safe Kids San Angelo is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing accidental injury. Safe Kids San Angelo was founded in 1994 and is led by San Angelo Community Medical Center.

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