

## *Protect Your Child -- Use Car Seats Correctly*

Driving is dangerous enough. Do everything you can to protect your children by making sure they're buckled up correctly before you leave the driveway. More children are injured or killed in motor vehicle accidents each year than in any other kind of accident. The proper use of car seats and restraints can help prevent many of these tragedies.

### **Follow these simple guidelines to minimize the risks:**

- Car seats go in the back. Children have been killed by passenger air bags because they were in the front seat. 20% of these deaths were among infants in rear facing child safety seats in front of a passenger air bag.
- Vehicles without a back seat, such as pickup trucks should either have a weight sensor on the passenger seat, or a manual deactivation switch, thereby preventing activation of the airbag if a toddler or infant seat is in place.
- Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for installation and use, and keep them with the car seat.
- The best car seat is the one that fits your child's size and weight, and can be installed correctly in your car.
- When purchasing a new car seat, send in the registration card so that you will be notified of any problems or recalls.
- Infants under 20 pounds or less than 1 year of age must ride in a rear-facing car seat. Such seats support and protect the baby's neck. BOTH the 20 pounds and one year milestone must be reached before turning them around.
- Children over 20 pounds or older than 1 year old should ride in front-facing car seats until they no longer fit in the seat.
- Parents should choose car seats with a five-point harness system. Such systems provide the greatest protection for infants in the event of a car crash. These systems have two straps at the shoulder, two at the hips, and one at the crotch.
- Children over 40 pounds should sit in a booster seat until the car's lap and shoulder belts fit right. The shoulder belt should lie across the shoulder, not the neck or throat, and the lap belt should be low and flat across the hips.
- Check with your local police department about having your installation checked. Most municipalities provide this as a free service.