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PRESS RELEASE

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IMPORTANT CHANGES TO CHILD SAFETY SEAT LAW EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1

Age that children must remain in a booster seat has increased to age 8.

The California Office of Traffic Safety is reminding parents, caregivers, and drivers to take note of a new law aimed at saving more lives and preventing more injuries of children across the state. Beginning January 1, children under age eight must be properly buckled into a car seat or booster seat, and in the back seat. Previously, the law required that children remain in a booster seat until the age of six or they weighed sixty pounds.

“This is an important new law that will impact more than 1.1 million children in California,” said Christopher J. Murphy, Director of the California Office of Traffic Safety. “Keeping them in booster seats increases their chance of surviving a crash by 45 percent.”

A coalition of child traffic safety organizations, including the Office of Traffic Safety, California Department of Public Health, California Highway Patrol, Safe Kids California, local law enforcement, public health agencies and fire departments are working together to make sure all those who need this updated information will receive it. Hospitals, day care centers, pediatricians, and local community service organizations are just a few that will be targeted.

“Although we know that placing children in age- and size-appropriate seats is the best way to reduce serious and fatal injuries, progressing children from rear-facing and forward-facing car seats to booster seats can be confusing,” added Dr. Ron Chapman, Director and State Health Officer, California Department of Public Health. “There is a Child Passenger Safety Coordinator available at your local public health department who can refer you to a fitting station where you can learn how to properly install child safety seats in the family car.”

(more)

New Booster Seat Law

The ticket price for violating this law is significant. For each child under 16 who is not properly secured, parents (if in the car) or the driver, can be ticketed for more than \$475 and receive a violation point on their driving record.

To save emptying your pocketbook or, more importantly, your child's life, complying with the law should be inexpensive. Most children impacted by the new law can remain in the booster seat they already have. If it is necessary to buy a new one, low back boosters can be purchased at major retailers for \$15 to \$20 each.

A booster simply "boosts" the child up in order to make the adult-sized belt safely fit a child-sized body. If the belt crosses the child's stomach instead of the hip bones, the child can be severely injured by the belt itself if involved in a collision.

A child fits an adult seat belt when:

- They can sit against the vehicle seat back with their knees bent without slouching and can comfortably stay in this position throughout the trip
- The lap belt is low on the hips touching the upper thighs and
- The shoulder belt crosses the chest, but is not on the face or neck
- Never let your child put the shoulder belt behind their arm or back. In a crash, the child could sustain major injuries including head and spinal cord injuries. If the child is putting the shoulder belt behind them, this is a sign that they still need a booster

For more information about car seats, the new law or help in determining if your child still needs a booster seat, call your local health department or visit www.cdph.ca.gov/vosp or http://www.ots.ca.gov/Child_Passenger_Safety.asp

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ATTENTION EDITORS: Below is a list of local contacts in major metropolitan areas who can speak about the new law and show the differences in types of seats, sizes of children and proper installation.

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