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Proper installation and use of child restraints ensure safety

Edmonton... Child safety seats have come a long way since they were invented in 1921, following Henry Ford's Model T. The early versions were essentially sacks with a drawstring attached to the back seat. Today's child restraints have to meet stringent federal standards and are very effective at saving lives – when used properly, child safety seats reduce deaths and serious injuries by about 70 per cent.

According to Transport Canada, every year about 10,000 children 12 years old or younger are injured, some of them fatally, in traffic collisions in Canada. Surveys show that one third of Canadian children are not properly restrained when they're travelling in motor vehicles.

In Alberta, every person travelling in a vehicle equipped with a seat belt must wear it or use a child safety seat. Whether the child is riding in the family car or in another vehicle, the law remains the same.

According to the Alberta Occupant Restraint Program, recent child safety seat inspection clinics in Alberta indicate that more people use child restraints correctly, but there are still some individuals who don't, which can make the safety seat ineffective in a collision. Recent studies in Alberta have also identified a significant number of people who do not use restraint systems for child passengers over six years of age.

The Alberta government advises that the only way to protect children from the dangers of collisions or sudden stops is to restrain them properly.

- Use a child safety seat with a label showing that it meets the Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standard.
- Children from birth to 18 kilograms (40 pounds) must use the child safety seat according to the seat manufacturer's instructions. This includes when the seat should face the back or the front of the vehicle.
- When facing the front of the vehicle, the child safety seat must be correctly installed with either the vehicle's seat belt or a universal anchorage system (UAS/latch) found on newer vehicles.
- The child safety seat tether strap must be attached to the tether anchor. If your vehicle does not have a factory installed tether anchor, one must be properly installed. Each forward-facing child safety seat must use a separate tether anchor.
- Secure a child weighing more than 18 kilograms (40 pounds) in a booster seat, which ensures the vehicle's seat belt is correctly positioned on a child. Children should use a booster seat until they weigh 36 kilograms (80 pounds) or are nine years old.
- Ensure you always follow the child safety seat manufacturer's instructions. Make sure you also check the vehicle owner's manual.
- Check the expiry date of your child's safety seat and replace any seat that has expired or is more than 10 years old. Always replace a child safety seat if it has been involved in a collision.
- Dress your child for the weather but avoid bulky clothing that can interfere with the harness system. Place a blanket on the child and harness in colder weather.
- Make sure the child safety seat's harness is adjusted to the proper height and snugness.
- Contact your local public health centre to obtain more information on child restraints.

It is recommended that children under 12 years of age should always ride in the centre back seat

position, if available because it is the safest location for a child safety seat. If there are three rows of seating in the vehicle, the second row would be the preferred location for the child safety seat.

For more information about child restraints and traffic safety, contact the Office of Traffic Safety at 780-422-8839 or visit www.saferoads.com or www.boosterseats.ca.

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