

Child Passenger Safety in Nebraska

Nebraska's child safety seat use has increased considerably over the years from 84% in 2005 to 97% in 2018 for children ages 0 to age 6.¹ These rates are significantly higher than the rate observed (56%) when observations started in 1999. Increases can be attributed to improvements in Nebraska's child passenger safety laws and statewide car seat check events and fitting stations that provide education and seat distribution.

Child Passenger Safety Statistics

During 2017 on Nebraska roadways:

- A total of 282 children ages 0-4 were injured;
- A total of 415 children ages 5-9 were injured;
- A total of 587 children ages 10-14 were injured.²

*Death numbers not included due to the low numbers.

How Does It Affect Nebraska

According to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, as children age, the overall risk of injury in a crash rises. This has proven to be true in Nebraska as well. Reasons for this, in part, include:

- The different ways children are restrained at each age (moving too soon to the next seat);
- Where they sit in the vehicle (back vs front);
- Other crash characteristics;
- The strength of a state's child passenger safety laws;
 - In Nebraska, children ages 8 to 18 are covered by a secondary enforcement seat belt law.

Strategies to Prevent Child Passenger Crash Deaths and Injuries

Education and Distribution Programs

Through the Safe Kids National Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Certification program, child passenger safety trainings are offered throughout the country, including in Nebraska, to train individuals to become Child Passenger Safety Technicians (CPST). CPST and instructors use their considerable knowledge and expertise at a variety of community-based activities, such as child safety seat checks and advocacy activities. Parents and caregivers receive education about best practice guidelines for car seat use and hands-on assistance about proper use of car seats. CPS technicians and instructors must keep up-to-date on the latest technical information about child passenger safety through seminars and other continuing education opportunities to maintain their certification. Many of these CPS activities take place in conjunction with car seat distribution programs.

Increasing the Age Requirement for Car Seat/Booster Seat Use and Rear-facing

Eichelberger et al studied five states that increased the age requirements for car seat/booster seat use to ages 7 or 8. They found that the rate of children using car seats and booster seats increased nearly three times, and the rate of children who sustained fatal or incapacitation injuries decreased by 17%.³ Nebraska improved its child passenger safety law and requires children up to age 8 to be in a car seat/booster seat. Surrounding states such as Kansas, Missouri, Colorado and Wyoming also require children through age 7 or older to be in booster seats.⁴

According to the Nebraska Crash Outcome Data Evaluation System (CODES) Program, from 2010-2014, the majority of children ages 4-8 involved in a motor vehicle crash were restrained using only a seatbelt (53%). There was a statistically significant difference in injury risk for children who were unrestrained, restrained using only a seatbelt, and restrained using a booster or child safety seat. Specifically, the risk of a significant or fatal injury among children ages 4-8 who were restrained using only a seatbelt compared to those restrained using a booster or child safety seat was 1.22 times higher.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) states that all infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing seat until they are at least two years of age or, preferably, until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their car seat manufacturer.⁵ Research shows children up to two years of age who are placed in forward-facing child safety seats are significantly more likely to be seriously injured in a crash than children of the same age in rear-facing child safety seats.⁶ Since the AAP's two-year, rear-facing recommendation in 2011, states across the country have updated their laws to meet this standard.⁵ Nebraska improved its law to meet the standard effective January 1, 2019.

Cited Resources

¹Nebraska Department of Transportation Highway Safety Office (NDOT HSO). *Nebraska Child Restraint Usage Rate 2005 to 2017*. Retrieved February 20, 2018.

<http://dot.nebraska.gov/media/6503/op5css.pdf>

²NDOT HSO. *Nebraska Children/Child Passenger Related Crash Data*. Retrieved September 5, 2017. <http://dot.nebraska.gov/safety/crash/cps/>

³Eichelberger, Angela H.; Chouinard, Aline O.; Jermakian, Jessica S. "Effects of booster seat laws on injury risk among children in crashes." *Traffic Injury Prevention*. Vol. 13, no. 6, 2012. Pp. 631-639., doi:10.1080/15389588.2012.660663.

⁴Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. *Child Safety: Child safety seat laws*. Retrieved September 5, 2017. <http://www.iihs.org/iihs/topics/laws/safetybeltuse?topicName=child-safety>.

⁵Healthychildren.org: American Academy of Pediatrics. *Car Seats: Information for Families*. Retrieved September 5, 2017. <https://healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/on-the-go/Pages/Car-Safety-Seats-Information-for-Families.aspx>.

⁶The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. *Car Seat Safety: Newborn to 2 Years*. Retrieved September 5, 2017. <http://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/car-seat-safety-kids/car-seat-safety-by-age/newborn-2-years>

Resources

Safe Kids Nebraska. <http://www.safekidsnebraska.org/>

Safe Kids Worldwide. <http://www.safekids.org/>

National Child Passenger Safety Certification. <http://cert.safekids.org/>

National Traffic Safety Administration. Parents and Caregivers.
<http://www.safercar.gov/parents/index.htm>

American Academy of Pediatrics. HealthyChildren.org.
<https://healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/on-the-go/Pages/Car-Safety-Seats-Information-for-Families.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Child Passenger Safety.
http://www.cdc.gov/Motorvehiclesafety/Child_Passenger_Safety/index.html

Nebraska Child Passenger Safety Crash Data. NDOT Highway Safety Office.
<http://dot.nebraska.gov/safety/crash/cps/>

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