

Child Passenger Safety in Nebraska

Nebraska's child safety seat use has increased considerably over the years from 84% in 2005 to 98% in 2016 for children ages 0 to age 6.¹ These rates are significantly higher than the rate observed (56%) when these observations started in 1999. This is due to improvements to 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 2015 on Nebraska roadways:

- A total of 253 children ages 0-4 were injured;
- A total of 384 children ages 5-9 were injured;
- A total of 590 children between the ages of 10-14 were injured.²

*Death numbers are suppressed due to the low numbers.

How Does It Affect Nebraska

In Nebraska, the risk of a motor vehicle crash injury increases as children get older.³ According to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, as children age, the overall risk of injury in a crash rises. This is due, in part, to the different ways they are restrained at each age (including improper seat belt fit); where they sit in the vehicle (back vs front); and other crash characteristics. Another factor that plays a role is the type of laws a state has.

In Nebraska, children ages 6 to 18 are covered by a secondary enforcement seat belt law in which children can ride without a car seat/booster seat after age 5.

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 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 programming.

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

In a study published in 2012 titled, "Effects of booster seat laws on injury risk among children in crashes," Eichelberger AH 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%.⁴ Currently, Nebraska's child passenger safety law requires children up to age 6 to be in a car seat/booster seat. Surrounding states such as Kansas, Missouri, Colorado and Wyoming require children through age 7 or older to be in booster seats.⁵

The American Academy of Pediatrics states that all infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing seat until they are at least 2 years of age or reach the highest weight or height allowed by their car seat manufacturer.⁶ According to research studies, children up to 2 years of age who are placed in forward-facing child safety seats are significantly more likely to be seriously injured in a crash than same age children in rear-facing child safety seats.⁷ Currently, California, New Jersey, Oklahoma and Pennsylvania have passed legislation requiring children under 2 to ride in a rear-facing car seat.

In a survey by Partners for Child Passenger Safety (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia), participants said they depend mostly upon state laws and local law enforcement for reliable information about how best to protect their children when transporting them.

Short-Term High-Visibility Enforcement

Community-wide information and enhanced enforcement that focuses on the use and correct use of car seats and booster seats can be combined with seat belt enforcement activities in order to increase car seat use.

Cited Sources

- ¹Nebraska Child Restraint Usage Rate 2005 to 2016. Nebraska Department of Roads Highway Safety Office (NDOR HSO). Retrieved November 10, 2016. <http://www.roads.nebraska.gov/media/6503/op5css.pdf>
- ²Nebraska Children/Child Passenger Related Crash Data. NDOR HSO. Retrieved November 22, 2016. <http://www.roads.nebraska.gov/safety/crash/cps/>
- ³Protecting Older Children in Motor Vehicle Crashes Fact Sheet. Retrieved July 16, 2016. <http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/InjuryPrevention/Documents/Child%20Passenger%20Safety%20for%20Older%20Kids%20FY16.pdf>
- ⁴Effects of booster seat laws on injury risk among children in crashes. Traffic Injury Prevention. November 2012. Eichelberger, Angela H.; Chouinard, Aline O.; Jermakian, Jessica S.
- ⁵Child Safety. Child safety seat laws. Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Retrieved September 21, 2016. <http://www.iihs.org/iihs/topics/laws/safetybeltuse?topicName=child-safety>
- ⁶Car Seats: Information for Families. Healthychildren.org; American Academy of Pediatrics. Retrieved September 21, 2016 <https://healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/on-the-go/Pages/Car-Safety-Seats-Information-for-Families.aspx>
- ⁷Car Seat Safety: Newborn to 2 Years. The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Retrieved November 10, 2016. <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 Central. <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
- The Use of Child Safety Seats in Nebraska. The Results of a Survey of Child Safety Seat Use, Fall 2016. NDOR HSO. Retrieved July 19, 2016. <http://www.roads.nebraska.gov/media/6706/childsafetyseat16.pdf>