

One Size Does Not Fit All: Choose the Right Car Seat for your Child

Sept 15-21 is Child Passenger Safety Week

Every day in America, millions of parents and caregivers travel with children in their vehicles. While some children are buckled in properly in the correct car seats for their ages and sizes – most are not, if they are buckled up at all. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), nearly half (46%) of car seats are misused. To help combat this issue, the Ventura Police Department is joining law enforcement agencies, public health departments and other community organizations to raise awareness about the importance of keeping children in the correct car seat for their age and size during Child Passenger Safety Week from September 15-21, 2019. The campaign is dedicated to helping parents and caregivers make sure their children ride as safely as possible—every trip, every time.

“Every 32 seconds in 2017, a child under 13 was involved in a passenger vehicle crash,” said Sergeant Mike Brown. “Using car seats that are age- and size-appropriate is the best way to keep your children safe.” According to NHTSA, motor vehicle crashes are a leading killer of children, and while fatalities and injuries declined in 2017 from 2016, there is still work to be done to completely eliminate these preventable tragedies. Car seats, booster seats, and seat belts can make all the difference. “In 2017, there were 312 children under the age of 5 saved because they were using restraints,” said Corporal Al Gomez. “Car seats matter and having the right car seat installed and used the right way is critical.”

He added that, too often, parents move their children to the front seat before they should, which increases the risk of injury and death, even if they are buckled up. The safest place for all kids under 13 is in the back seat. Also, according to NHTSA, in 2015, about 25.8 percent of children 4 to 7 who should have been riding in booster seats were prematurely moved to seat belts, and 11.6 percent were unbuckled altogether.

“As parents and caregivers, we have a long list of things we do for our children to keep them safe. One of the simplest and most important things on the list should be to make sure they are in the right car seat for their age and size,” Corporal Al Gomez said. “Get your car seats checked. Make certain they’re installed correctly, and that your kids are in the right seats and are buckled in correctly. Even if you think your child’s car seat is installed correctly, get it checked with a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician, so you can be sure that your child is the safest he or she can be while traveling.”

NHTSA recommends keeping children rear-facing as long as possible, up to the top height or weight allowed by their particular seats. Once a child outgrows the rear-facing-only “infant” car seat, he/she should travel in a rear-facing “convertible,” or all-in-one car seat. Once your child outgrows the rear-facing size limits, the child is ready to travel in a forward-facing car seat with a harness (always use the tether). After outgrowing the forward-facing car seat with harness, children should be placed in booster seats until they’re the right size to use seat belts safely. And if children are under 13 years old, they should always sit in the back seat.

Remember to register your car seat or booster seat with the seat manufacturer so you can be notified in the event of a recall. Parents and caregivers can schedule a car seat installation or car seat check at the local Ventura CHP Office by calling 805-662-2640.