Give Our Kid’s Safety A Boost . . .

The average man is considerably larger than most five-year-old children. Yet, we allow children older than four or weighing more than 40 pounds to ride in a vehicle with a safety system designed for the average male: 5'10” and 175 pounds!

In Nevada once a child is five, or weighs more than 40 pounds, they are no longer required to be in an approved child safety seat. Many parents take this to mean that it is safe for them to use the car’s restraint system. This is an understandable mistake.

Safety belts alone do not fit children in this size group very well. The shoulder belt often rides across the neck, with the result being that the child puts the shoulder belt under the arm or behind the back. Because their pelvic bones are not completely formed, the lap belt tends to ride high across the abdomen. Belt-positioning boosters are needed until the safety belt fits the child correctly. Correct fit means the shoulder portion of the safety belt is snug across the chest (not against the neck) and the lap belt is low across the upper thighs/hips (not up over the abdominal area, which can cause serious injuries). The shoulder belt should NEVER be placed under the arm or behind the back! Children usually need to use booster seats until they are at least 80 lbs. or 4’9” in height, but proper safety belt fit is the best indicator.”

Restraint use plummets when children outgrow their child safety seats.

Tragically, last year in Nevada 100 percent of the children ages 5 to 8 killed in crashes were unrestrained in the vehicle. One-half of this age group involved in fatal crashes were not buckled up.

NV OTS-2001 FARS Report

Serious injuries can result from shoulder belts placed under the arm or behind the back and when lap belts are not low across the hips. Booster seats position the child so that the lap belt fits low and snug and the shoulder belt fits across the chest and shoulder. Unlike rear-facing and forward-facing child safety seats, the job of the booster seat is to properly position safety belts, which are strong enough to absorb crash loads from large adults.

Key Points:
Great progress has been made increasing the use of child safety seats. In Clark County the infant use rate is highest, followed by small children, under 3. At 4 and above we see use rates at half the national average of 90 percent.

A child who cannot sit with his or her back straight against the vehicle seat back, with knees bent over the seat’s edge, without slouching, must use a booster seat.

Only 6.1 percent of booster-size children are estimated to be using a booster seat.

Child safety seats – including booster seats – are very effective in saving children’s lives during crashes.

As of July, 2002 there are seven states who have booster seat laws in effect. Another 13 states have introduced legislation covering children in booster seats.

The best child passenger safety laws in the country are primary enforcement, which cover kids through age 15, and include provisions for booster seats and children under 12 riding only in the backseat when available.
What do the numbers say?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Could Happen</th>
<th>Restrained</th>
<th>Not Restrained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dead</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injured (non-disabling)</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible Injury</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Injury</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fatality Analysis Reporting System, NHTSA

© Child safety seat use plummets after age three. In one study, by the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, one-half of 3 to 8 year old children were not being placed in child safety or booster seats, where most of them belong.

© Small children (age 2 to 5) who are placed in seat belts rather than child safety seats or booster seats are 3.5 times more likely to be significantly injured in a crash. They are four times more likely to receive a significant head injury.

© More than half (56%) of all children under 15 years old killed in car crashes in 2000 were completely unrestrained.

© Unrestrained children are three times more likely to be injured than those who are restrained.

The National SAFE KIDS Campaign rates the states in Child Passenger Safety and Nevada has room for improvement:

Early last year the SAFE KIDS Campaign released a study on child passenger safety laws across the U.S. Nearly half (24 states) received an “F”.

If that isn’t alarming enough here are some more of the findings:

Nearly half of all states earned F’s and more than a third of all states (18) and the District of Columbia earned D’s. In many states children are legally allowed to ride completely unrestrained in the back seat of a vehicle, while other states allow young children to ride improperly restrained in only an adult seat belt.

34 states allow child passengers to ride unrestrained due to exemptions. Exemptions include: nursing mothers, out-of-state plates, non-state-resident drivers and overcrowded cars.

Each year, nearly 1,800 children 14 and under, die in motor vehicle crashes, and more than 274,000 children are injured. Riding unrestrained is the greatest risk factor for death and injury among child occupants of motor vehicles. Children who are not restrained are far more likely to suffer severe injuries or even death in motor vehicle crashes. Yet approximately 30 percent of children ages 4 and under ride unrestrained, and of those who do buckle up, 4 out of 5 children are improperly secured. Only 5 percent of 4 to 8-year-olds ride in booster seats.

Nevada’s report card from the report follows. As you see, there is great need for us to review our child passenger safety laws.