



Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning
4000 Collins Road P.O. Box 30633 Lansing, MI 48909-8133
(517) 336-6477
www.michigan.gov/ohsp

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Contact: Anne Readett
(517) 333-5317

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Report: Most child safety seats used incorrectly

Although nearly 80 percent of Michigan children use child safety seats when riding in vehicles, 71.4 percent of the devices are installed incorrectly, according to a new report prepared for the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP).

The Wayne State University-Transportation Research Group determined the state's 79.7 percent use rate by conducting observational and interview surveys from April to August 2005.

The findings show that more children are riding in child safety seats and more are being installed correctly than in 1997, when the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute found 74.5 percent of children restrained and 88.5 percent of those child restraint devices installed incorrectly.

"Child safety seats that are installed incorrectly don't fully protect children in traffic crashes," said Michael L. Prince, OHSP division director. "Child restraint devices—and their proper use—are the best way to prevent one of the leading causes of children's death."

The study found that drivers who buckle up are more likely to restrain children as well. About half (51.3 percent) of drivers who did not wear a safety belt used a child restraint device, while 81.2 percent of drivers who wore a safety belt also restrained their children.

Other findings include:

- Pick up drivers were the least likely group to use child safety seats, with a 53 percent use rate. Van/minivan drivers are the most likely at 87.9 percent.
- Men (76.9 percent) are less likely than women (81.1) to have children in safety seats.
- Child safety seat use increases with the driver's age. Drivers ages 16-29 (74.6 percent) are less likely to use child safety seats than ages 30-59 (82.4) or 60+ (84.4).
- The most common misuse errors are loose tethers (52.1 percent), tethers that are routed incorrectly (50.0), harness retainer clips not at the armpit level (28.6) and loose harness straps (24.8).

The new report is the first to study the use and misuse rates since the Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children (LATCH) system was introduced in September 2002. Vehicles equipped with LATCH have anchors built into the rear seating positions to secure the child safety seat device with tethers instead of a safety belt. The LATCH system was available in 57.1 percent of the vehicles surveyed, but used in less than a third (32.6 percent). Only 28.6 percent of the child safety seats attached with LATCH were installed correctly.

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Michigan law requires the use of child safety seats for children under 4 years old. To make sure a child safety seat is installed correctly, parents can take their child and the seat to a fitting station for no charge. Find the closest child safety seat inspection location by visiting <http://www.nhtsa.gov/cps/cpsfitting/>.

For a copy of the full report, visit www.michigan.gov/ohsp, click on "Occupant Protection & Impaired Driving Programs" on the left-hand column and then click on "Child Restraint Use and Misuse Report" under the Child Passenger Safety heading.

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