



HARFORD COUNTY GOVERNMENT Office of Risk Management

PRESS RELEASE

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NEW CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY LAW EFFECTIVE JUNE 30, 2008 *PROTECTS MORE OF MARYLAND'S CHILDREN*

(Bel Air, MD – June 4, 2008) - - Starting June 30, 2008 a new law will require Maryland's children up to age eight to use a child safety seat or booster seat when riding in a motor vehicle, unless the child is 4'9" tall or taller or weighs more than 65 pounds. The current law requires children to use safety seats until they reach six years of age and weigh 40 pounds.

"This new law will help protect older children who are not ready for adult seat belts," said Kathy Acquavella, Harford County Highway Safety Coordinator. "Even after reaching the current requirement of age six and a weight of 40 pounds, most children are not tall enough for adult seat belts to fit properly."

Proper fit for a seat belt means the lap-shoulder belt fits low on the child's hips and across the mid-chest. If the belt fits across the child's neck or stomach, the child could be injured in the event of a crash.

The new law means some children who have been secured with adult seat belts under the current law will have to return to a safety seat or booster seat. The appropriate seat for most six to eight year olds is a booster seat—which is designed to raise the child up so that adult seat belts will fit properly. Booster seats do not have harness straps and are not permanently installed in the vehicle.

"We've seen too many children seriously injured in crashes because they were not adequately protected with the proper safety seat, and the updated law will protect more children than ever before," said Acquavella. "We know that using the right seat for the child's age and size can greatly reduce the risk of injuries when traveling on Maryland's busy highways."

Fortunately, boosters are generally the least expensive type of safety seat, with some starting as low as \$13. For families who cannot afford to purchase a safety seat, loaner programs are available throughout the state.

For more information about Maryland's child passenger safety laws and loaner programs, call Maryland Kids in Safety Seats at 1-800-370-SEAT, or visit their Web site at: *mdkiss.org*

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