



Short Safety Subject

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www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm

Kids And Car Safety

Today's kids are very mobile, often riding in the car several times each day. Most trips go without incident. Sometimes there is a close call, perhaps a quick stop or a near-miss when another driver is careless. Tragically, accidents do occur. On average in the US, three children die each day from car accidents. Another 260 are injured. Many of these deaths and injuries could be prevented.

Fatal accidents have been known to occur at slow speeds, even in driveways. Children are small, and if they are approaching a car the driver probably won't see them. Tragically, children have been killed in their excitement over the arrival of a visiting friend or relative. They forget the dangers and run up to the car before it stops. Teach your children never to approach a vehicle, even if they think it is standing still. They will need to be reminded of this often! Watch your children closely if they play on driveways and sidewalks, and be alert for cars pulling in and out of the driveway.

Parking lots pose other dangers. Drivers will probably not be able to see a small child. Always hold a small child's hand when walking through a parking lot. Older children should be warned of the dangers of a parking lot, too. Kids are easily distracted and forget about safety. In their excitement over a shopping trip or some other excursion, they may forget that cars are around and their safety is in danger.



Avoid the temptation to leave your kids in the car while you tend to a quick errand. True, it can be a hassle to deal with car seats and fussy kids - you may even have to wake up a sleeping baby - but take the kids in with you. Why chance your children's safety? There are lots of things that can happen. Unattended children have been abducted in parking lots. Kids have started the car and caused accidents while they were left unattended. They've suffered heat stress because of the extremely rapid rise in temperature inside a car on a hot or sunny day. They have also been known to leave the vehicle and go searching for their parent when the "quick errand" took longer than expected. Perhaps the worst story is a case where an unattended car caught fire and small children were trapped inside. So don't leave your kids in a car by themselves, the consequences could be severe.

On the road, be sure to use a car seat as required by your state's law. Generally, infants weighing up to 20 pounds must ride in a rear-facing car seat. Children between 20 and 40 pounds must

ride in an approved forward-facing seat. Though they're not usually required, booster seats are a good idea for children between 40 and 60 pounds. Older children must be taught to always wear their seatbelt and wear it properly. Disabled children may need other protection. Check with your child's physician for specific advice.

When using a car seat, always follow the manufacturer's instructions. Be sure to consult your car owner manual for additional information about car seats. Some cars require special hardware, such as a locking clip, to ensure the seat stays secure in the car. You should not use a car seat that has been involved in an accident. The seat could be structurally damaged and no longer provide proper protection. Avoid using second-hand seats. They could have been involved in an accident or have missing parts which render them ineffective at protecting your child.



Be consistent in the use of the car seat. Some parents use car seats only for long trips. Actually, most car accidents occur within 25 miles of home. Since you never know when an accident will happen, use your car seat correctly every time. While you are traveling, do not remove a child from a car seat or allow seatbelts to be unbuckled. If your child needs to get out of the car seat or the seatbelt for any reason, wait until you can safely pull off the road. Holding a child on your lap will not provide protection even in a minor accident. The force of a collision can easily loosen your child from your grasp.



Airbags have been the subject of much discussion lately. If your car has a passenger side airbag, the safest place for your child is in the back seat. Never place a rear-facing infant carrier in a seat with an airbag. In a crash, the airbag could strike the back of the car seat with enough force to injure or kill the baby.

Injuries and deaths can be prevented if car safety rules are followed and followed consistently. Don't chance your child's safety. If you have other questions about child safety and cars, your local police department can help. Your child's pediatrician also has helpful information on the subject.