Volvo offers tips for child passenger safety week

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Q: What can turn a 60-pound child into a 2,700-pound elephant?

A: A 30-mph crash.

Force = Mass x Acceleration. While that maybe an oversimplification, the fact is the laws of physics are unyielding. Imagine this: A 60-pound, unbelted child in the back seat of a car traveling at a mere 30 miles per hour involved in a sudden collision can weigh as much as a young elephant -- about 2,700 pounds. That means the child, during a frontal collision, can impact the windshield or the front seat occupant -- with deadly force. Not a pretty physics lesson.

False: An unbelted person in the rear seat is safe.
True: It's a human tragedy that is easy to prevent -- CLICK!

Some important statistics.

Accidents will happen, but they don't have to become tragedies. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has proclaimed Feb. 11-17 Child Passenger Safety Week to reinforce the point.

According to NHTSA, an estimated 7,896 children under the age of 5 were saved from 1975 to 2005 by the use of safety belts and child restraints. Among passengers over the age of 4, seat belts saved an estimated 15,632 during the same period. The National Safe Kids Campaign says 75 percent of all crashes occur within 25 miles of home, and most of those take place on roads with maximum speed limits of 40 mph or less.

In 2005, 1,946 children age 14 or younger were killed riding as passengers in motor vehicle accidents. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety reports that motor vehicle crashes account for one in three injury-related deaths among children. Further, it states that crash injuries are the leading cause of death among 5-12-year olds.

Some important thoughts.

"Restraints help people and cars move together," says Ingrid Skogsmo, Director of Safety for Volvo Car Corp. in Sweden. "Imagine trying to keep your balance in a standing-room-only train car as it lurches forward suddenly or stops abruptly without something to brace yourself.

"People are just full of reasons for not belting back seat passengers," she added. "School's just three minutes away, we're just going to the grocery store or just over to friend's house. We're full of excuses but, in the end, if we don't belt our children -- or any rear seat occupant -- we're setting them up for injuries or death. 'Sorry' doesn't go very far then."

A young elephant?

"Unless one studies physics, the numbers seem unreal. But they are very real," Skogsmo added. "In the rapid deceleration that occurs at the moment of impact, a child's "crash weight" increases dramatically. For instance, at 30 miles per hour, an unbelted 60-pound child will be hurled forward with a force that multiplies the impact approximately 45 times above normal, depending on the object collided with. At 42 miles per hour, those numbers rise to 75 to 150 times normal. So, in effect, the crash weight of a 60-pound child at 42 miles per hour can range from 4,500 to 9,000 pounds. That's an astounding two to four tons, or about the weight of an elephant. A crushing force indeed."

But weight, there's more.

A car's seat belt keeps doing its job of helping to retain the occupant within the safety structure of the cabin after the initial impact has occurred. Accidents might involve secondary impacts and rollovers. It is the seat belts that help keep the rear-seated occupants strapped safely inside the vehicle until the energy of the accident has dissipated.

"During a rollover, the effect is very much like clothes in a washing machine during the spin cycle. There are huge forces that can easily eject occupants who are not using a seat belt," Skogsmo said.

Volvo and rear seat safety features.

Volvo pioneered the in-car use of three-point front seat belt system in 1959. Rear-seat outboard three-point belts became standard Volvo fare in 1967 -- 23 years before they were required by U.S. law. Since 1985, Volvo has installed rear center-position three-point belts in its 740/760 series and later 940/960 series. Today, all Volvos are equipped with three-point seat belts at all seating positions. Even the V70 and Cross Country wagons, when fitted with the optional rear-facing third row seat, include three-point belts.

Small children who have outgrown their toddler seat should use a booster cushion to help properly position the three-point seat belt. Volvo offers the integrated child booster cushion for children 40-80 pounds who need to be comfortable and properly restrained. There are two styles: one that can be moved from car to car, and

another that is built into the seat cushion. The car's rear seat bottom opens up, its lower half then forming a booster seat cushion. This cushion is high enough to correctly position the lap portion of the seat belt low across a child's hips and, together with the vehicle's adjustable center head restraint, forms a comfortable and safe seat for the child.

The most important safety feature of all.

"I'm often asked, 'What's the most important safety feature in a Volvo?,'" Skogsmo said. "With great fun, I say, 'The driver.' After all, the driver makes the decision to properly use safety devices we engineer into our cars. Using seat belts is so easy, if more people understand the law of physics, they would see the importance of using seat belts -- in both front and rear seats. Parents should set the example by using their seat belts and insisting the rear seat passengers do the same. Offer your beloved children the same safety you do when you buckle-up. Having everyone belted is a great gift of life and love."

So do your part for car safety. Help protect that most precious cargo of all -- buckle them up. No one wants an elephant in the back seat.

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