

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Kate Quirk, Project Coordinator

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A., carseatkate@yahoo.com

(310) 222-6860 or (800) 745-SAFE (English)

(310) 222-6862 or (800) 747-SANO (Spanish)

Major Step Forward for Safety of California's Youngest Children; Child Passenger Safety Program Announced

Press Conference Scheduled to Announce New Program

WHAT: Safety seat checkup and press conference

WHY: Traffic crashes are the #1 cause of death and serious injury to children, but 9 out of 10 children are not properly buckled up. New law passed to better protect under-2s.

WHERE: Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center

WHEN: Saturday, November 7, 2015, 8 am – 1 pm (news conference 9:00 am)

WHO: Stephanie Tombrello, Executive Director, SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A., representatives from Pomona Police Department, Pomona Valley Medical Center

TOPICS: Incorrect use of safety seats; new child passenger safety law; traffic safety.

(Pomona, November 7, 2015) — Child safety advocates are hailing the passage of a new bill as a major step forward in protecting California's youngest travelers. The new law, introduced by Assembly Member Cristina Garcia, will require children under the age of two to ride rear facing in the car – a year longer than the current requirement.

Stephanie Tombrello, Executive Director of SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A., welcomes Assemblyperson Garcia's initiative. "It has been clear for many years that riding rear facing is much safer for everyone but is especially important for young children because their bodies are less able to withstand the enormous forces involved in a car crash. Keeping children riding facing rear until at least the age of two will provide the very best protection to many more of our most vulnerable road users."

Though parents have until January 2017 before they are at risk of citations under the newly expanded law, safety experts are keen to alert families now to the safety benefits of rear-facing travel. "We are excited to have the opportunity this law brings to protect young children," said Tombrello. "We'll be working hard to get the message out and to help parents as they learn how best to protect their children."

The passing of the new law comes at the same time as the announcement that a flagship SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. child safety program, hosted by Pomona Police Department, has attracted a fifth year of support from California Office of Traffic Safety. Community members and the media are invited to attend a demonstration event at 9:00 am to learn about the program, which is funded by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

The initiative aims to make parents with children aged 0–12 aware of the importance of properly fitted safety seats and safety belts in protecting kids as passengers in motor vehicles. A safety seat checkup organized to kick off the project will allow families to get in-depth inspections of safety seats by certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians. Parents who wish to have their children’s seats checked should call the Pomona Police Department Traffic Services Bureau at 909-620-2081 to make an appointment.

The project funds monthly safety seat checks by specially trained officers from Pomona Police Department. Correctly installing safety seats is vitally important to protect children properly in a crash. At checkups in the city in the last year, 9 out of 10 seats were found to be installed incorrectly.

The program also offers a statewide helpline for parents and a safety seat inspection station at the Pomona Police Department. Any member of the community who wishes to get involved with the program is invited to call the Safe Ride Helpline at 800-745-SAFE (English) or 800-747-SANO (Spanish).

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. is the national nonprofit organization solely dedicated to child passenger safety and was founded in 1980 by fifteen Los Angeles-area safety advocates. The organization is nationally recognized for technical expertise and program excellence.

Briefings for journalists will be available throughout the event.

This program is made possible with funding from a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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