

For immediate release

Contact: Stephanie Tombrello, Executive Director  
SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.  
(310) 222-6860, [stombrello@carseat.org](mailto:stombrello@carseat.org)

## Fatal Pasadena Crash Highlights Lessons for Parents During Special Enforcement Period

LOS ANGELES, CA (April 25, 2009)—The fatal crash Wednesday, in which an Altadena mother and her 9-year-old daughter were killed and two younger children severely injured, marks a tragic wake-up call to parents, according to an Altadena-based non-profit.

The crash occurred in the middle of Safety Seat Checkup Week, an initiative designed to raise parents' awareness of the risks that their children face in the car. The preceding week also was designated Special Enforcement Week for child passenger safety by many law enforcement agencies state-wide, who use the opportunity to step up enforcement of the child restraint law within their jurisdictions.

“Our hearts go out to the family impacted so tragically by this crash,” said Stephanie Tombrello. “Unfortunately their story is all too common. Traffic collisions remain the **number one** cause of death and severe injury to children in our country. Safety Seat Checkup Week is all about getting parents' attention to the risk that they run every day and what they can do about it.”

According to Tombrello, most parents do not know the best way to protect their children from crashes. As a result, more than 90% of kids are riding at risk in vehicles. To offer the best protection, parents should heed some key safety messages:

- All kids ride in the **back seat**, until age 15. The back is 40% safer than the front.
- Use a **booster seat** until the child fits the safety belt properly—usually at about 10–12 years old.  
Take the 5–Step Test at [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org) to see if your child fits the belt.
- Attach the **top tether** whenever using a forward-facing safety seat.

MORE...

- Keep children **rear-facing** until at least age 2, or 30–35 lbs.

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. staff and volunteers took the opportunity today to pass on these vital safety messages to parents at a large safety seat checkup held at the Petersen Automotive Museum, Los Angeles to mark the end of Safety Seat Checkup Week. According to Tombrello, the event confirmed what child passenger safety specialists already know:

“Today, the checkup was very typical of what we see on our streets. Fifty–eight of the sixty children whose seats we checked today were riding at risk. It just goes to show that even safety-conscious parents make mistakes that can result in serious injuries to their children.”

Some of the typical errors seen at the checkup included: children riding forward-facing too soon; seats not being installed tightly in the car; parents forgetting to lock the safety belt after buckling in the car seat; harnesses being too loose; and parents buckling the safety belt through the wrong part of the car seat. Trained safety seat checkers recorded 10 errors on one seat being used by a 2–year–old. Two seats were unattached to the car, though the parents had thought they had attached them correctly.

In 2006, 179 child passengers under 15 died in California and 18,318 were injured as a result of vehicle crashes. California Highway Patrol report that more than 80% of the small children killed in car crashes would have survived if they had been properly buckled up.

Special Enforcement Week was co-sponsored by Peace Officers Association of Los Angeles County and SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. Many city and county governments sent proclamations and resolutions recognizing the special week.

The event was sponsored by California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Peace Officers’ Association of Los Angeles County, with cooperation from the Petersen Automotive Museum. To learn how to use safety seats and safety belts correctly, call the Safe Ride Helpline at 800-745-SAFE (English) or 800-747-SANO (Spanish) or go to [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org).