

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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DUI CRASHES INJURE KIDS, REMIND PARENTS OF RISK OF DRIVING IMPAIRED

ALTADENA, CA (August 21, 2009) – A series of DUI-related crashes this summer have had a common, tragic outcome — children dying or being seriously injured because they were riding with an impaired parent or caregiver.

On August 15, three children, aged 2, 5 and 6, were in a minivan traveling on Interstate 10 near Indio when their intoxicated driver lost control of the car after tread separated on one of the tires. During the subsequent roll-over crash, two of the children were ejected from the vehicle. The driver, Edward Dunbar, was subsequently arrested for felony child endangerment and felony driving under the influence. Dunbar and another adult also were injured.

It was reported that two of the children were restrained in some way. The five-year-old was not using a safety seat or safety belt.

Another recent crash in Westchester County, New York, allegedly involving a DUI driver, killed eight people, including four children. That crash has led the Governor of New York, David Paterson, to introduce The Child Passenger Protection Act, which would make drinking and driving a felony if children under the age of 16 are in the car.

The pattern is all too familiar to Stephanie Tombrello, Executive Director of SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. “Almost 400 kids die on our roads each year in DUI-involved crashes,

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and many more are injured. Twenty-five percent of the crashes that kill children involve alcohol. Most of these kids aren't placed at risk by a stranger but by the person with whom they are riding.”

The trauma suffered by vulnerable children makes Tombrello angry. “These small children had no say about whether or not they got in the car with an impaired driver. Too many kids are killed or injured by the actions of people who should protect them. Most of these deaths and injuries are preventable by properly buckling up. Unfortunately, these kids are especially vulnerable because they are often not buckled up, making it much more likely that they will be killed or seriously hurt.”

Supported by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. is campaigning to reduce the number of children killed or injured in DUI-related incidents by making parents, policy makers, and enforcement agencies aware that impaired drivers are especially dangerous when driving with children.

Tombrello's message is unequivocal. “Driving while under the influence with a child in the car, or allowing your child to be driven by an impaired driver, is child abuse. We should treat it as such.”

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