

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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Tragedies Leave Two Children Dead, Four Injured, as Child Passenger Safety Week & Major Injury Prevention Conference Begin in the State; DUI suspected.

TORRANCE, CA (April 4, 2016) – Two California children are dead, and four more injured after two single-vehicle crashes. In both cases, the victims were unrestrained, and DUI is suspected.

A two-year old child was ejected and killed in Hesperia on Saturday morning when the car her father was driving left the roadway and overturned. Three other children aged 6 months to 8 years suffered minor injuries. The children's father was arrested on suspicion of child endangerment and felony DUI.

A fifteen year old was killed and her ten-year-old sister hospitalized with critical injuries after a crash in Murrieta early Thursday morning when the driver reportedly fell asleep at the wheel and hit a telephone pole. Neither child was restrained. The driver and the children's mother, both of whom were buckled up in the front seat, are expected to be charged with offences including drug use and driving under influence of drugs. The family was reported to have been living out of the vehicle.

The deadly crashes came during Special Enforcement Week when law enforcement agencies around the state commit to offering enhanced enforcement of the child restraint law in an effort to highlight the ongoing tragedy of deaths and injuries of children in crashes. The week is marked each year ahead of Child Passenger Safety Week which began today and runs until April 9.

According to to Stephanie Tombrello, Executive Director of SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A., children dying in DUI crashes is a little-understood problem – especially when the driver is the parent: “Almost 400 kids die on our roads each year in DUI-involved crashes, 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 a person responsible for their welfare – often a parent. We are particularly discouraged by these deaths which have occurred during Special Enforcement Week and while we are celebrating the largest traffic safety conference, Lifesavers, coming to Long Beach and preparing for Child Passenger Safety Week which begins today.

Children are especially vulnerable to being driven by caregivers under the influence, but even more kids also are put at risk by parents who think they are buckling up their children correctly but in fact are not: research shows that 9 out of 10 kids ride in safety seats that are not being used correctly, even though 85% of parents think their children are properly restrained. SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. is offering a free safety seat checkup as part of the celebrations of this year’s Safety Seat Checkup Week this Saturday, April 9, 10 am – 2 pm at the Petersen Automotive Museum, Los Angeles. Tombrello urges parents to make use of the opportunity: “These tragic cases should serve as a reminder to all parents that children need to be protected in the car. Don’t take a chance on your child’s safety – get your safety seat properly checked by a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician.” Parents who wish to make an appointment for the checkup on Saturday can call SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. at 310-222-6860 or show up at the Petersen Automotive Museum between 10 am and 2 pm.

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