



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104

Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5534

www.adph.org

Changes in Alabama's child restraint law affect child restraint/booster seat use

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Nancy Wright
(334) 206-5314

Amanda Martin
(334) 206-7063

Legislation passed in the Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature and signed by Gov. Bob Riley provides specific criteria for car seat and seat belt use by children in motor vehicles in Alabama.

The amended law, effective July 1, will require children up to age 15 to be in an appropriate restraint while riding in a vehicle. Specifically, children birth to 1 year of age or weighing 20 pounds or less must be restrained in a rear-facing infant or convertible child restraint (in the rear-facing position). Children between the ages of 1 year and 5 years old or children weighing between 20 and 40 pounds must be restrained in a convertible child restraint (in the forward-facing position) or a forward-facing-only child restraint. Children at least 5 years of age or 40 pounds to 6 years of age must be restrained in a booster seat. A safety belt is required from 6 years of age until 15 years of age.

"Motor vehicles" are considered to include passenger cars, pickup trucks, vans (with a seating capacity of 10 or less), minivans and sports utility vehicles.

According to Nancy Wright, assistant director of the Injury Prevention Division, Alabama Department of Public Health, "Parents want to ensure the safety of their children in motor vehicles. Under the old Alabama law, children could legally use seat belts. The amended law is closer to national guidelines and will aid in helping parents transport their children safely."

Guidelines from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) state that seat belts do not properly fit young children, which can cause serious injury in the event of a motor vehicle crash. Children should be restrained in child safety seats or booster seats until the vehicle's lap and shoulder belt fit correctly -- the lap portion of the belt rides low over the hips and the shoulder portion crosses the shoulder and chest. Children are usually ready for the adult seat belt when they can sit with their back against the seat with knees bent over the seat edge and their feet on the floor. Children 12 and under should sit in the vehicle's back seat.

Under the amended law, the fine imposed on violators is \$25. A portion of the fine will be used to distribute vouchers for size-appropriate child passenger restraint systems to families of limited income. To identify habitually negligent drivers, the Alabama Department of Public Safety will assess a one point penalty for the first offense and 2 points for the second or subsequent offenses.

For more information on appropriate use of seat belts and child restraints, or to find a trained car seat technician in your area, please visit the Alabama Department of Public Health's Web site at www.adph.org/injuryprevention.

6/30/06