



New Product Update Heavier-Weight Boosters, LATCH Kits

Few radical new concepts are being announced, with the exception of the "Air Bag Compatible Infant Seat." Many new combination seats and belt-positioning boosters (BPs) now accommodate children weighing up to 80 or even 100 pounds. Products are often announced before they are ready for manufacture. Others will be announced in May 2002 at the annual Juvenile Products Show.

LATCH-related progress—at least publicly—is scant. Evenflo is announcing the first LATCH-compatible RF-only restraint. Only Britax, Volvo, and Safeline say they are developing rigid ISOFIX-style attachments. Most have chosen or are leaning toward the webbing/hook style attachments. Cosco and Evenflo have joined Century and Columbia Medical in offering LATCH retrofit kits for certain existing models.

So far, manufacturers are not developing LATCH systems for their BPs. FMVSS 213 (49 CFR 571.213) does not require it. The makers of combination CR/BP seats vary in their LATCH-usage instructions in the BP mode.

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses below refer to weights.

Britax

The Freeway Plus forward-facing only seat has been discontinued in the wake of last year's LATCH-compatible Expressway forward-facing only (20–40).

Car Seat Specialty

The existing Uno and Polo backless boosters are now joined by a wider booster called High Ride and by the Topper, which offers a removable high back with an adjustable head rest that can extend 6 inches. The High Ride offers 1.25 inches more inside seating than the Uno/Polo but has the same outside width and fabric strap adjuster. The Dreamer is a deluxe Topper that has a fold-out foot to give it a slight recline. All six BPs serve 33 to 80 pounds.

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Study of Crashes Shows Kids Still Ride in Front

A recent study looked at more than 28,000 fatal crashes between 1990 and 1998. The proportion of children age 12 years and under riding in the front seat declined from 42 to 31 percent. Other findings:

- Children were less likely to be in front in a vehicle with a passenger air bag than in other vehicles.
- Women were four times more likely than men to seat children age 6 years and under in front.
- A child was five times more likely to be seated in front with the driver when the child was alone with the driver.
- Children over 6 years of age were more likely to be in the front seat than younger children.

Reference:

Wittenberg, E; Goldie, S; Graham, JD. "Predictors of Hazardous Child Seating Behavior in Fatal Motor Vehicle Crashes: 1990–1998." *PEDIATRICS*. 2001; 108(2):438-442. Reprints available from www.pediatrics.org or from Dr. Wittenberg, eve_wittenberg@dfci.harvard.edu

Vest/Harness Use with Boosters

Use of E-Z-On Vest & Harness with Backless Boosters not yet Recommended

E-Z-On Products has been interested in responding to the need for a product to use with lap-only belts in both passenger vehicles and school buses. The company's "proper use" video issued last May recommended using its E-Z-On Vest or 86Y Harness with a backless booster for children aged 4 to 7. No particular brand of booster was mentioned. (Instructions for the harness have included that recommendation for several years.) In the video, the 86Y Harness or 1086 cam-harness was recommended with a booster in school buses for children aged 3 to 7.

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Air Bag On/Off Switches Misused

NHTSA reports that many children in vehicles with factory-installed air bag shut-off switches are exposed to active air bags. Vehicles with built-in on/off switches either have no back seat or have a back seat too small for a rear-facing CR. Over 1,600 observations of late-model pickup trucks were conducted in four states and the drivers were interviewed.

The survey showed 48 percent of children age 1 through 12 were riding with the air bag switch on. Most drivers said they thought air bags should be off only for rear-facing infants or for children younger than theirs. Some always left the air bag on because they thought it safer that way.

Drivers transporting rear-facing infants had the air bag turned off in 91 percent of the cases. Both vehicles (9 percent) with the air bag on were driven by people unfamiliar with the vehicles.

In 18 percent of the cases, air bags were turned off while adults were in the passenger seat. Many of the drivers indicated that children frequently rode in the passenger seat so they left the air bag turned off at all times. This deprived the adult of the potential benefit of the air bag.

NHTSA urges advocacy groups to continue long-term education of the public about the risks and benefits of air bags. As of July 1, 2001, the agency said there were approximately 10.2 million pickup trucks on the road with the switches. There also are many sports cars, cargo vans, and some other vehicles with aftermarket switches. These vehicles can be expected to be in use for many years.

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AAA CPS Certification Update

AAA's new database software system is working well. We are now on schedule, sending re-certification written tests 90 days prior to the certification expiration date. If you are within 90 days of your certification expiration date and have not received the written test, please contact AAA at **407/444-7958**. Many tests are returned due to bad mailing addresses. If you moved or changed jobs during the past year and have not notified AAA, please contact AAA and provide your current mailing address.

The annual administrative fee is being increased for the first time since the program began in 1998. The AAA CPS certification program is intended to be operated at cost. After careful review of the total costs of processing certifications and re-certifications for past year, the certification and re-certification fee for 2002 is being raised to \$20.00 in order to cover our costs only. Primary factors for the increase were costs associated with a number of problems mentioned below. The increase for re-certification was effective January 1, 2002 and the initial certification fee will be increased at the next printing of the manuals in the Fall.

Minimizing Delays

To minimize delays in processing re-certification requests, please take a mo-

ment to check over your documents. Delays are often caused by:

Too much paper. If you do not have an instructor available to sign off on the four required seat configurations, you may supply a copy of a check sheet used for each configuration. Only ONE check sheet is necessary for each configuration. (Some people have sent in all the check seats for the entire year.)

Blank spaces. Fill in all required blank spaces on forms.

Missing signatures. Sign all forms and send in the original scantron sheet.

Waiting to until the last minute. Please do not wait until close to the deadline to get signed off or gather the required check sheets. Many pleas for extension have been due to not having the required four seat configurations done before the expiration date.

Follow instructions. There is only one re-certification test and we (AAA) distribute it.

Wrong or incomplete address used for AAA. Use the address provided on the forms to send in re-certification materials. We have received forms forwarded from NHTSA, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, and the National Safety Council.

Form of payment. Do NOT send cash. This fee is non-refundable in the event you do not pass the second written test, as the fee is to cover costs of processing your re-certification request.

Name and other information that is hard to read. Please print clearly.

If you do not receive confirmation of your re-certification after 45 days, please contact us at 407/444-7958.

Thanks to all of you for your hard work, support, and dedication to saving children's lives while riding in motor vehicles. I look forward to another year during which we can continue to improve the safety of occupants in motor vehicles.

—Bill Wen, Manager, Training and Professional Development, AAA

Air Bag 'Friendly' CR Challenges Standard Practice

Xportation Safety Concepts Inc. (XSCI) has launched the nation's first rear-facing child restraint designed and tested as "air bag compatible." The restraint serves children from 5 to 22 pounds.

The product was developed to find solutions for existing real-world problems, such as:

- Parents who resist rear-seat installation or whose vehicles have no rear seat or a very small one.
- Families who do not have or always use the air bag on/off switch.
- Parents who turn to view infants in the rear seat, increasing distraction-related car crashes (the company commissioned a study on this point).
- Limited head protection for infants, even when placed in the back seat.

The Pioneered Air Bag Compatible Infant Seat (ACIS) design consists of a removable cradle and a tough plastic helmet-like shell that envelops the child. The shell is made of energy-absorbing foam sandwiched between layers of specially formulated plastic. The cradle snaps into a shock absorber system within the shell. The shell and shock absorbers deflect energy away from the child in the cradle. XSCI has done considerable research and testing.

Instructions for ACIS do not urge placing the restraint in front of an air bag but do state that it has been tested and found to provide considerable protection from a deploying air bag. The required air bag warning label will be on the pad, although XSCI has petitioned NHTSA.

The ACIS has an unusual installation method. The cradle and helmet-base always must be used together. The through-the-base belt path is typical. Another belt path option, over the baby's legs, can be used to restrain both the cradle and the base. This would be a misuse for other two-part infant restraints on the market.

Contact: www.safeinfant.com

NOTE: Howard Willson, retired engineer for DaimlerChrysler, is a consultant to XSCI and as well as a member of the Editorial Board of SRN. He reviewed this article but did not contribute to it.

Child Passenger Safety TECH REPORT is published quarterly by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Articles are primarily compiled with permission from copyrighted material originally published by Safe Ride News Publications, Shoreline, WA, in the September/October and November/December 2001 and January/February 2002 issues of *Safe Ride News*.



New Product Update, continued from page 1

Other additions: Baby One infant seat and carrier with five-point harness (5–22); Safety Basic convertible (5–30 RF; 22–40 FF) with multiposition recline, three shoulder and two crotch positions, and narrow base; Speedway combination seat with removable back (22–40 with harness; 33–80 as BPB), and Duo, BPB with removable back (33–80).

Combi International

Combi, a Japanese manufacturer, had announced its first products for the U.S. market, but has cancelled its plans.

Cosco/Safety 1st

Both brands of the Dorel Juvenile Group are rolling out combination seats (22–40 with harness; 30–100 as BPB). Both the Cosco Summit and the Safety 1st Vantage Point offer three harness positions, three crotch strap positions, and front adjustment. The Cosco Summit harness and head restraint slide as a unit, similar to the Alpha-Omega, eliminating the need for harness rethreading.

The LATCH-compatible Triad is being replaced by a Safety 1st product, the Fore-runner. Its LATCH attachments have been simplified; the same straps are used for both RF and FF orientations.

The Cosco Opus 35 infant seat is being phased out, but there are more models of the Designer 35 (5–35 RF), the same concept with a different handle.

Cosco's LATCH Retrofit Kit was shipped in December. The single strap with hooks is for Cosco, Eddie Bauer, and Safety 1st infant and child car seats with harnesses made since 1995. It is not for use in BPBs, shield boosters, car beds, or travel vests.

Evenflo

The Cozy Carry infant seat (5–22) offers compatibility with the new Evenflo LATCH retrofit kit, three- or five-point harnesses, two buckle options, and visual confirmation of successful buckling.

The Titan convertible (5–30 RF; 20–40 FF) offers four harness slots (two RF, two FF), two buckle positions, harness-slot adjustment from the front, and five-point or shield options.

The Triumph convertible (5–30 RF; 20–40 FF) and the Apollo combination (20–40 with harness, 30–80 as BPB) offer har-

ness adjustment on the side plus moveable adjusters that require no rethreading. They also feature a "memory harness" that returns the harness to its adjustment for travel after the child gets into the CR.

A LATCH kit for lower attachments, SecureRight System Retrofit Kit, has simple tether-type hooks and a one-pull (A-Lock) adjuster. It can be used with most current/recent Evenflo convertibles, infant CRs, and combination CR/BPB when used with harness. Compatible models are listed in the directions. Note: it is not to be used with On My Way bases.

Graco/Century

The new Vante infant carrier-base restraint (birth–22) offers five-point protection. The existing Celestia infant seat, Accel convertible, and Next Step combination seats may be offered in LATCH-ready models, subject to retail interest.

Jupiter Industries

The new Komfort Kruiser BPB (33–100) succeeds the GTX. The shock-absorbing foam has a space cockpit concept, a hinged seatback that reclines to match vehicle seats and an extra-deep seat.

La Roche Bros.

The "bear" series of high-back, energy-absorbing foam BPBs has grown to include the Teddy Bear (30–80), Grizzly Bear (40–100), and Polar Bear (30–100). The Grizzly and Polar Bear are 2 inches taller and wider than the Teddy. These BPBs can easily be reclined to fit vehicle seatbacks.

Peg Perego

Peg Perego has shortened the harness on its infant-only restraint for its travel systems. The company is planning more research to assess the suitability of the three-slot device, which has low harness slots, for infants weighing less than 6 pounds.

Safeline Kids

The Mission Control BPB is being discontinued. The Sit'n'Stroll convertible's rear-facing weight limit has been revised downward to 22 pounds.

Simpson

This vendor for motor sport gear had hoped to offer a unique LATCH-ready forward-facing seat capable of harnessing a

child to 60 pounds. However, this project is currently described as "on hold."

At this point, Simpson is offering the Century Breverra Classic under its own label, with a special race-car style cover. Neither the special Breverra nor the prototype seat has a Simpson model name.

Snug Seat

The Snug Seat 2 has been discontinued. Crash-testing for domestic use is scheduled on a versatile European jogger-stroller with a removable child restraint. Aimed at the disability market, several sizes may be offered, possibly up to 135 pounds.

Xportation Safety Concepts, Inc.

The new Airbag Compatible Infant Seat is being produced (see page 2).

Resource: For a complete list of manufacturers' contact numbers and websites, go to www.safetidenews.com

Recalls, February 2000

Safeline Kids

Sit'n'Stroll Model 2240 made April 1 through October 31, 2001

The motor vehicles/aircraft certification label on approximately 3,500 seats was printed in yellow instead of red, which is required of FMVSS 213. Replacement labels will be provided free of charge. The manufacture date is either a label on the side of the seat or molded in plastic on the upper back. Owners should contact the manufacturer at 800/829-1625 during business hours, Mountain Time.

American Honda Motor Co.

Rear safety belts, Accord and Civic, 2000–2001

Rear seat belt buckles on over 16,000 vehicles made between July and Sept. 2000 may be difficult to unfasten after a crash. Only buckles marked (on the back side of the buckle) with an assembly number beginning with 00185, 00186, or 00187 have the problem. Honda dealers will inspect the vehicles and replace the seat belt assemblies that were improperly manufactured. Owners who do not receive notification and the free remedy within a reasonable time should contact Honda, 800/999-1009.



Vest/Harness Confusion, from page 1

SRN found none ready to sanction vest or harness use with its backless boosters. SRN also sought but has not found FMVSS 213 test data to support booster use with a harness or vest. It would, therefore, be prudent for advocates not to recommend the joint use of these products until more is known.

Certification of existing boosters or E-Z-On's products used alone is not at issue here.

So far, only one maker of backless boosters, Car Seat Specialty, has tested its boosters with the 86Y harness. Tests were run with the 3-year dummy because the lower limit on its boosters is 30 pounds. These tests showed excessive chest accelerations and, in a few cases, high HICs (head injury criterion). Car Seat Specialty has asked E-Z-On not to recommend this use of their Polo or Uno booster.

The poor test results surprised many who had assumed that the two devices would perform well when used together. In the early '80s, the first boosters sold in this country met FMVSS 213 using a similar booster/harness configuration.

When asked by SRN, Evenflo said it has not tested its booster with E-Z-On's products. Cosco also has not run any tests, but a spokesman says it may do so soon.

Recently, independent tests of the 86Y harness/booster combination were

run at the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute (UMTRI) to explore various installation configurations and combinations. The results were not satisfactory with the 3-year dummy.

Connie Murray, president of E-Z-On Products, commented that children in passenger vehicles should be in regular CRs as long as possible. The 6-year dummy would be more appropriate for tests of boosters with her vest or harness. The booster/86Y combination on school buses starting at age 3 was to accommodate Head Start providers' needs. Murray says E-Z-On plans to run more tests, including some with the 6-year dummy, in the near future.

Q-Strait Vests for Bus Use Only

Q-Strait, a maker of tie-downs for wheelchairs in vehicles, has developed several versions of its Q-Vest, which is designed for use with a cam wrap. Information released by the company last spring and confirmed in writing in July indicated that two versions could be used in passenger vehicles as well as school buses. Recently, the company clarified to SRN that its vests, which do not have provision for use with lap belts, are intended for use only on school buses (see box).

Two early versions of the Q-Vest are described as meeting FMVSS 213 on the Q-Strait website, under Accessories. SRN obtained UMTRI crash test data showing that head excursion of these mod-

NEWS: Cam Wraps on School Buses March 2002

In a recent interpretation of FMVSS 213, NHTSA has applied it strictly to CRs sold for use on school buses. Previously, the standard was not strictly enforced for such specialized restraints and was used by manufacturers as an advisory test procedure.

FMVSS 213 does not permit attachment of a CR to a device that wraps completely around the vehicle seat back. The NHTSA interpretation affects the use of cam wraps in school buses. A cam wrap is a seat-mounted anchor familiar to those in the school bus safety field. It is a strap wrapped vertically around the vehicle seat back, attaching to the vest at the shoulders and hips. Mounted on the seat, it does not require a lap belt and depends on seatback strength. Because it does not require a lap belt, this type of anchor has often been used on school buses for restraint of preschoolers as well as older children with special needs. Most school buses do not have lap belts.

NHTSA is now determining how this change will be implemented. Stay tuned.

els was more than 2 inches beyond the 32 inch limit of 213. Test results on a newer model, reported by the company as passing FMVSS 213, were later rescinded.

Contacts:

E-Z-On Products, 800/323-6598;

www.ezonpro.com

Q-Strait: 800/987-9987;

www.qstraint.com

Tips for Assessing Product Claims

- Develop working knowledge of standards to help judge what is unorthodox.
- Question suggestions to disregard test failures. If the information source is a manufacturer, look for other perspectives.
- Beware of simplistic answers. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Pass along the claims and questions to experts in research and engineering for analysis via Safe Ride News (www.saferidenews.com) or to Safety-BeltSafe U.S.A. (www.carseat.com).

—Research assistance by Sue Miller Smith

CALENDAR

National SAFE KIDS Week, May 4–11. The focus will be on brain injury, especially related to wheeled vehicles and sports. It will target parents and “tweens” aged 8–12 with the message “No Helmet? No Brains!” Contact www.safekids.org to find your local coalition.

Safe Communities, 11th International Conference, May 7–9, Rainy River Dist., Ontario, Canada. This conference will focus on skills needed by safety coalitions to work effectively in communities worldwide. Safe Communities is an initiative of the World Health Organization. Contact: www.who2002.com

6th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Control, May 12–15, Montreal, Canada. The meeting will draw people in all aspects of the injury field from researchers and engineers to advocates and community organizers. Road safety will be one of six major themes. The People's Right to Safety Charter will be adopted. Contact: www.trauma2002.com

Lifesavers, June 9–11, Lake Buena Vista, Fl. National Highway Safety meeting. Contact: www.lifesaversconference.org or 703/922-7944