

CHILD SAFETY

2002

Virginia State Law

Children under 4 years of age must be restrained in a child safety seat that meets federal standards.

All children between 4 and 16 years of age must wear a safety belt no matter where they are seated in the vehicle.

The driver is responsible for all children in the vehicle.

Police officers can stop a vehicle for not having children properly restrained.

National Statistics

Children 12 years and younger represented 20% of the US population in 2002 and 5% of motor vehicle deaths. *(IIHS)*

Among those 5-12 years old, crash injuries are the leading cause of death. *(IIHS)*

2,095 children died in motor vehicle crashes in 2002 . *(IIHS)*

An average of 6 children were killed every day in motor vehicle crashes in 2002. *(NHTSA)*

An average of 721 children were injured every day in motor vehicle crashes in 2002. *(NHTSA)*

Seventy percent of child motor vehicle deaths in 2002 were passenger vehicle occupants, 29% of the child occupants were in the front seat, 61% were in the rear, and the rest were in cargo or unknown areas. *(IIHS)*

Twenty-three percent of child motor vehicle deaths in 2002 were pedestrians, and 7% were bicyclists. *(IIHS)*

Motor vehicle crashes cause about 1 out of every 3 injury deaths among children 12 and younger. *(IIHS)*

Child motor vehicle deaths are highest during the summer months. *(IIHS)*

More child motor vehicle deaths occur on weekends than on weekdays. The peak time is 3 – 6 p.m. (*IIHS*)

Child Endangerment (Alcohol):

In 2002, 22% of the children under 15 years old who were killed in motor vehicle crashes were killed in alcohol-related crashes. (*NHTSA*)

Of the children 0-14 years old who were killed in alcohol-related crashes during 2002, more than half were passengers in vehicles with drivers who had been drinking. (*NHTSA*)

Another 60 children under 15 years old who were killed in traffic crashes in 2002 were pedestrians or bicyclists who were struck by drinking drivers. (*NHTSA*)

Child Safety Seats:

From 1975 through 2002, an estimated 6,567 lives were saved by the use of child restraints (child safety seats or adult belts). (*NHTSA*)

In 2002, an estimated 376 children under age 5 were saved as a result of child restraint use. (*NHTSA*)

If 100% of motor vehicle occupants under 5 years old were protected by child safety seats, an estimated 485 lives (that is, an additional 109) could have been saved in 2002. (*NHTSA*)

Child safety seats have been found to reduce injury by 71% for infants (less than 1 year of age) and by 54% for toddlers (1-4 years of age). (*NHTSA*)

A study by the National Safe Kids Campaign showed that 81.6% of all child safety seats are installed incorrectly. (*NSKC*)

The National Safe Kids Campaign found that the majority of parents or caregivers made two or more mistakes in installing and using the child safety seats. (*NSKC*)

According to the National Safe Kids Campaign Study:

About 64% of the time, the car seat was not secured tightly enough by the seat belt.

Some 66% of children were in restraints with loose harness straps.

About 20% of children were in child seats where the harness straps were not correctly routed.

Some 11% of the time infants less than a year old or weighing less than 20 pounds were observed riding in forward-facing car seats instead of rear-facing ones.

The neck muscles of children under a year old are not sufficiently developed to ride facing forward in a crash.

In less than 1% of the cases, infants were incorrectly placed in rear-facing infant seats in front of a passenger side airbag. If the airbag deploys, the infant can be injured.

Safety Belts:

Sitting in the rear seat instead of the front seat reduces fatal injury risk by 36% among children 12 and younger. (*IIHS*)

In 2002, there were 459 occupant fatalities among children under 5 years of age. Of those fatalities, an estimated 185 (40%) were totally unrestrained. (*NHTSA*)

Contact Information

Call the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Auto Safety Hotline (1-800-424-9393) to see if any recalls or safety notices have been issued on your child safety seat.

The Virginia Department of Health has a 24-hour hotline (1-800-732-8333) that explains how to obtain child safety seats, reference materials, handouts, and speakers as well as how to destroy old child safety seats.