Proper Use of Child Safety Seat Restraints

- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of accidental injury-related death among children ages 14 and under.
- The total annual cost of motor vehicle occupant-related death and injury exceeds $17.8 billion for all children ages 14 and under.
- Although safety belts and child restraints are the single most effective tool in reducing these deaths and injuries, nationally, more than half of children killed in vehicle crashes are unrestrained. Minority children are at a greater risk of being unrestrained.
- Misuse and non-use of child restraints remains high, with children ages 5 to 9 having the lowest usage rate at just 33 percent.
- Research shows that child restraints, when used properly, reduce the risk of fatal injury up to 71 percent.
- Most parents think they are using child safety seats correctly, but studies show that an estimated 73 percent of seats are used incorrectly.

Extension’s Response

- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service’s Passenger Safety Project works to reduce childhood deaths and injuries from motor vehicle crashes by increasing the use of child safety seats across Texas.
- The project conducts the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s four-day Child Passenger Safety Technician Course, which trains and certifies technicians to assist parents with child safety seat education.
- Child safety seat checkup events are conducted primarily in under-served rural areas to educate parents on the correct usage of child safety seats.
- The Passenger Safety Project has overseen the inspection of more than 12,900 child safety seats in Texas, 99 percent of which were being used incorrectly or were unsafe or inappropriate for the age and weight of the child.

Economic Benefit

- Proper use of child safety seats reduces the risk of injury and death, leading to reduced medical costs, avoidance of lost future earnings and improved quality of life. On a per safety seat basis, economic benefits are approximately $2,200 for new seats distributed and $590 for seat misuse.
- For the 1,795 safe seats inspected in 2011, the economic benefit is an estimated $2.1 million. Since the program’s inception in 1999, the total economic benefit is estimated at $19.1 million.

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