

CHILD SAFETY RESTRAINTS



Ralph Seekins

OK. We've discussed this topic before. But, I've had a number of requests to run it again – all for what I think are good reasons.

Car seats had changed a lot since our own kids were toddlers. In fact, I didn't know what a car seat was until much later in life. We routinely held our babies on our laps as we traveled down the road. Now, I wonder how we kept them safe. Maybe we were just lucky. And that thought brought me to today's discussion.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, traffic crashes are the leading cause of death and injury in children ages 0 – 15. In response, Alaska passed laws requiring the use of child safety devices in vehicles on the highways.

Alaska law (AS 28.05.095) provides that, with only rare exceptions defined in the law, a driver may not transport a child under the age of 16 in a motor vehicle on a highway unless the driver has provided the required safety device and properly secured each child as described in that section of the law.

If a child is less than 1 year of age or a child one year of age or older who weighs less than 20 pounds, that child must be properly secured in a federally approved rear-facing infant seat in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. (It's safest to keep children facing to the rear as long as possible.)

If a child is one or more years of age but less than 5 years of age and weighs 20 pounds or more, that child must be properly restrained in a federally approved child seat used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

If a child is over 4 years of age but less than 8 years of age and less than 57 inches (4ft-9in) tall and weighs 20 or more pounds but less than 65 pounds, the child must be properly secured

in a federally approved booster seat that is secured by a seat belt or by any other child restraint system that meets or exceeds the federal standards and is used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If a child is over 4 years of age and exceeds the height and weight restrictions above, the child must be properly secured in a seat belt.

If a child is eight years old but less than 16 years old but does not exceed the height and weight requirements in the above paragraph, he/she must be properly secured in a federally approved child safety device approved for a child of that size or a safety belt, whichever is determined appropriate by the driver.

And, one other thing, keep children under 13 years old properly secured in the back seat! That, believe it or not, is the safest place for all small passengers.

Ralph Seekins has more than 42 years' experience in the automotive industry. He started as a mechanic, worked in sales, and for the past 35 years, has been the owner of Seekins Ford Lincoln.