



LOMPOC FIRE DEPARTMENT

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Fire Chief*

Each year children suffer serious injury or death in car accidents. Children need special protection when traveling in motor vehicles and many of these injuries can be prevented by the correct use of child safety seats. It is estimated that 80-90% of child safety seats are improperly installed. The best car seat is one that fits the child and the vehicle, and one that is easy to install and is used every time the child is in the car.

A tragic Tale



In July 2005, Santa Barbara County Fire Department responded to a vehicle rollover on US Highway 101 with reports that there were patients ejected onto the roadway. What responders saw at the accident scene was disturbing. The three ejected were children and included a two month old infant, a five and seven year old.

The Fire Department was the first Advanced Life Support provider to arrive at the accident scene. The first thing responders noted was a small infant in the fast lane screaming, which indicated that she was still very much alive. One of the first emergency service providers to arrive on scene was an off duty police officer from San Luis Obispo County who rendered aid to the victims until the Fire Department arrived on scene. Also responding to the incident were four rescue ambulances and Calstar's Medivac Helicopter with two nurses on board.



The reason the infant was ejected from the vehicle was from a 50-cent piece of plastic that was down to the buckle by the umbilical level. This piece is called the Harness-Retainer Clip which needs to be placed at the armpit level (as shown at left). Firefighters found that the seat belt and harness were too loose, the retainer clip was down to the umbilical level and the carrier handle was in the up position verses the correct position with the carrier handle placed toward the back of the car seat.





The three-year-old boy was strapped in his car seat almost perfectly and suffered absolutely no injuries. The five and seven year old boys were ejected out the back passenger windows and one of them had a booster seat with no seat belt, as indicated on the ground. (The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and CDC recommend the use of booster seats for children who weigh at least 40 pounds, are aged 4--8 years, and are less than 4 feet 9 inches tall).

The whole situation could have had a much happier ending and could have been easily addressed had the parents attended a Car Seat Installation Class provided by the City of Lompoc Fire Department.

Another Example of how a Properly Installed car seat and safety belt can save you and your child's life



On an early October morning the Santa Barbara County Fire Department responded to a vehicle accident near New Cuyama on HWY 166. In this instance a 4-door sedan lost control on the highway and slid sideways into oncoming traffic.

Another vehicle broadsided the sedan at full speed. A 2-½ year old girl was properly restrained in her car seat. As seen in this photo, the location of the seat was intruded over 18 inches. The driver and 2-½ year old girl were transported to the hospital and sustained only minor injuries.

Don't put your children at an unnecessary risk of being injured or killed in crashes because they are simply in the wrong restraint for their size or are improperly restrained.

For more information
on car seats and car seat safety
Contact the
Lompoc Fire Department at
805 736-4513