STUDY FINDS 1 IN 4 PARENTS HAVE DRIVEN WITHOUT BUCKLING UP CHILDREN

Affluent, educated and young parents are worst offenders

Raleigh, NC – As part of National Child Passenger Safety Week (September 15-21), Safe Kids Worldwide today released “Buckle Up: Every Ride, Every Time,” a new study that finds an alarming percentage of parents are not always taking the time to ensure their children are safely secured in vehicles.

The report, funded as part of a $2 million grant from the General Motors Foundation, is based on a national online survey of 1,002 parents and caregivers of children ages 10 and under. It reveals that one in four parents admit to having driven without their child buckled up in a car seat or booster seat. In fact, more affluent parents, parents with higher levels of education, and young parents are more likely to make exceptions when it comes to buckling up their kids on every ride. Men were also more willing than women to bend the rules.

“The number of children dying in car crashes has declined by 58 percent since 1987 but this research shows that the trend toward buckling up kids on every ride could be heading in the wrong direction,” said Debbie Newman, Safe Kids Wake County. “It only takes one time to be riding in a vehicle without buckling up for a life to be changed forever. During Child Passenger Safety week, we want to remind all parents that it’s important to buckle up their kids every time, on every ride.”

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death to children. In 2011, 679 children ages 12 and under died in motor vehicle crashes. A third of these children (221) were riding without a child safety seat or seat belt that could have saved their lives. In addition, older children are more often unrestrained in fatal car crashes compared to younger children.

“As kids grow up, it can be easy to forget the importance of taking time to buckle up, especially on a quick or overnight trip,” said Mike Robinson, GM vice president of Sustainability and Global Regulatory Affairs, a GM Foundation board member. “Unfortunately, exceptions can lead to tragedies. The research findings underscore the importance of remaining vigilant about buckling up throughout a child’s lifetime. There is no reason important enough to take the risk.”

The report also highlights that when parents make exceptions it sends a powerful message to kids that it’s not important to buckle up on every ride. As these kids get older, they could be more likely to find exceptions for buckling up as well. Teenagers have the lowest rate of seat belt use of all age groups.

Report Highlights

The survey asked parents if it was acceptable for a child to ride unrestrained in a vehicle in certain circumstances, including driving a short distance, if the car or booster seat was missing, during overnight travel, as a reward for the child, or if they chose to hold the child in their lap. The results were staggering.
Buckling Up on Short or Overnight Trips
- Twenty-one percent of parents said it was acceptable to drive with their child unrestrained if they are not driving far. However, 60 percent of crashes involving children occur 10 minutes or less from home.
- Some parents (16 percent) also feel it is acceptable to allow children to ride unrestrained on overnight trips. However, this is the time period when children are most likely to be injured in a crash.
- Twenty-three percent of younger parents (ages 18-29) said it would be acceptable to ride with a child unrestrained when traveling overnight compared to 13 percent of older parents (ages 30-49). More than one in four (27 percent) younger parents said it would be acceptable for short rides compared to 19 percent of older parents.

Affluence
- One in three of more affluent parents (34 percent), those with a household income of $100,000 or higher, said it was acceptable to leave their child unrestrained if they are not driving a far distance, compared to 15 percent of parents making less than $35,000.

Education
- Parents with graduate degrees are twice as likely to say it is acceptable to drive without buckling up their children, compared to parents with a high school education, particularly when they are in a rush (20 percent compared to 10 percent).

“Buckle Up: Every Ride, Every Time,” provides recommendations for improving laws around child passenger safety, including upgrading weaker booster seat laws to cover children up to the age of eight, and renewing a commitment to enforcing child passenger safety laws.

In addition, parents and caregivers are encouraged to follow three safety strategies consistently:
1. Buckle up on every ride, every time
2. Talk to the adults who will be driving your kids about buckling them up
3. Check that the right seat is used and that it is installed properly

Child Passenger Safety Week culminates with National Seat Check Saturday on September 21. Safe Kids will host more than 500 child seat inspections across the country, offering guidance from certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians on proper installation of child safety and booster seats. Safe Kids Wake County will be holding an event this Saturday, September 21, 2013 at the Target in Knightdale located at 1000 Shoppes at Midway Drive from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

About Safe Kids Wake County
Safe Kids Wake County works to prevent unintentional childhood injury, the number one cause of death for children in the United States. Safe Kids Wake County is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing unintentional injury. Safe Kids Wake County was founded in 1996 and is led by WakeMed Health & Hospitals. For more information, visit safekids.org.

About the GM Foundation
Since its inception in 1976, the GM Foundation has donated hundreds of millions of dollars to American charities, educational organizations and to disaster relief efforts worldwide. The GM Foundation focuses on supporting Education, Health and Human Services, Environment and Community Development initiatives, mainly in the communities where GM operates. For more information, visit www.gm.com/gmfoundation.

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