



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR

CHIYOME LEINAALA FUKINO M.D.
DIRECTOR
Phone: (808) 586-4410
Fax: (808) 586-4444

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NEW BOOSTER SEAT LAW BEGINS JANUARY 1, 2007

HONOLULU – The Department of Health reminds everyone to get their booster seats now to prepare for the state’s new booster seat law. Beginning January 1, 2007, all children ages four through seven will be required to ride in a child safety seat or a booster seat whenever traveling in a motor vehicle. The only exemptions are if the child is over 4’9” or if the vehicle has lap-only seat belts in the rear seat, in which case the child is not required to use a booster seat, but must wear the seat belt.

“The proper use of child passenger restraints is the most important factor in preventing death and disability in a car crash,” said Health Director Dr. Chiyome Fukino. “Children in booster seats are 60 percent safer than in seat belts alone.”

Seat belts were designed for older children and adults, not for young children, whose size and physical development make seat belts less effective, and in some cases, unsafe. Including Hawaii, a total of 38 states plus Washington, D.C., have booster seat laws.

On average, about 600 children ages four through seven years of age are involved in major car crashes in Hawaii each year; 126 visit the emergency room and nine are hospitalized. Medical costs average an estimated \$43,000 per child injured (this does not include lost wages and productivity of parents and employers and cost of suffering).

Drivers will be held responsible for compliance with the law. Violators of the law are required to attend a 4-hour class and may be assessed a fine of between \$100-\$500, depending upon the number of offenses.

A Hawaii State tax credit of \$25 per year applies to the purchase of a child safety seat or booster seat.

For more information, please contact the Keiki Injury Prevention Coalition (KIPC) / Safe Kids Hawaii at 537-9200 or www.kipchawaii.org

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For information contact:
Janice Okubo
Communications Office
Phone: 586-4442