

Log H-374

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: November 30, 1983

-----  
Forwarded to:  
Ms. Elaine Weinstein Lawless  
Executive Director  
National Child Passenger Safety Association  
Post Office Box 841  
Ardmore, Pennsylvania 19003  
-----

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)  
H-83-64  
-----

On September 7, 1983, the National Transportation Safety Board completed a safety study of child motor vehicle passenger protection. 1/ For the purpose of the study, the Safety Board conducted 3 regional public hearings and investigated 53 accidents involving infants and small children, restrained and unrestrained, in 19 States. The study highlighted the dangers to unrestrained children in accidents and noncrash incidents, such as sudden stops, and underscored the lifesaving and injury-prevention potential of child safety seats. As a result of the study, the Safety Board concluded that misuse of child safety seats is a significant problem which requires considerably increased emphasis.

To date, 40 States and the District of Columbia 2/ have enacted laws requiring that infants and small children traveling in motor vehicles be properly protected by child safety seats. While much of the focus of child passenger safety efforts has been concentrated on the passage of legislation and the development of public information and education programs, there is a growing recognition that the implementation of the laws, and especially their enforcement, has not received sufficient attention. An increasing number of jurisdictions are finding that the passage of a child passenger protection law is just the beginning, and that a considerable amount of effort is required for effective planning and coordination of its implementation.

A critical element of implementation is the training and education of law enforcement officers in the positive role that they have in enforcing a child passenger protection law. In many cases, law enforcement officers have not been trained to enforce child passenger protection requirements effectively. It cannot be assumed that individual officers and their superiors at all levels will automatically be supportive and committed to enforcing a child passenger protection law in the absence of such training and of a written enforcement plan.

The Safety Board is aware of the National Child Passenger Safety Association's (NCPA) concern about the implementation of child passenger protection laws. Furthermore the Safety Board believes that NCPA is in an excellent position to assist the States in identifying implementation problems and in developing effective programs

1/ For more detailed information, see Safety Study--"Child Passenger Protection Against Death, Disability, and Disfigurement in Motor Vehicle Accidents" (NTSB/SS-83/01).  
2/ The Governor of Pennsylvania signed a child passenger protection law on November 1, 1983, bringing the total to 42 laws.

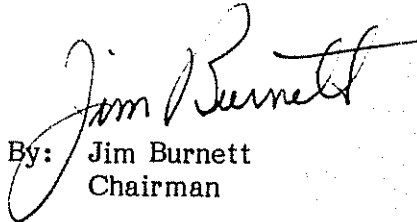
which would address the need for effective law enforcement plans and training, public information, education, and safety seat loan programs, the evaluation of the effectiveness of such laws and programs, and efforts to combat safety seat misuse.

Therefore, as a result of its Safety Study of Child Passenger Protection Against Death, Disability, and Disfigurement in Motor Vehicle Accidents, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the National Child Passenger Safety Association:

Assist the States in developing effective programs to implement child passenger protection laws. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-83-64)

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility "...to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations" (P.L. 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any actions taken as a result of its safety recommendations. Therefore, we would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendation in this letter.

BURNETT, Chairman, GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, and McADAMS, BURSLEY, and ENGEN, Members, concurred in this recommendation.

  
By: Jim Burnett  
Chairman