

Connecticut Technician Report May 2004

Recertification Clock is Ticking!

Please begin the process now. Any technician or instructor with an expiration date between June 1, 2003, and November 1, 2003, can still re-certify without penalty and without participating in an additional course, but the registration process must be completed by May 31, 2004. Beginning June 1, 2004, they will no longer qualify for re-certification.

Since the interim process for past-due re-certification has several steps that cannot be completed in a single sitting, we recommend that all affected individuals begin the process right away.

Please call National SAFE KIDS at (877) 366-8154 for more information.

New Seat

The Mercedes TopSafe is a convertible seat with a 3 point harness that goes up to 30 pounds rear-facing. Some of the rear-facing features include a rebound bar, infant insert for infants up to 13 pounds, and an Australian style tether. This seat also includes the system where the front passenger airbag shuts off in certain Mercedes vehicles. The seat may also be used forward-facing for children who are 20 to 40 pounds, with the rebound bar retracted and the child using a padded shield instead of a harness.

(Information from *SafetyBeltSafe* News)

Rear Side Airbags

Please see the NHTSA consumer advisory on this subject at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/press/1999/ca101499.htm>
It was issued in 1999 but is still in effect.

Here's the full text of the advisory:

"Side impact air bags can provide significant supplemental safety benefits to adults in side impact crashes. However, children who are seated in close proximity to a side air bag may be at risk of serious or fatal injury, especially if the child's head, neck, or chest is in close proximity to the air bag at the time of deployment. Because there are variations in the design and performance of side air bags, manufacturers should notify consumers regarding whether it is safe for children to sit next to the side air bags. Children 12 and under should always travel in the rear seat and use an age-appropriate restraint.

"Since children should be seated in the rear seat, NHTSA has asked each manufacturer of vehicles with rear side air bags to ship the vehicles to dealers with these air bags deactivated, unless the manufacturer has determined that those side air bags impose no significant risk to children. Purchasers who want such air bags activated, after being advised of the potential risk to out-of-position children, should be able to have them switched on by their dealer. We are also asking manufacturers to advise current owners of vehicles with such rear side air bags that the owners can bring them back to their dealer to have the bags deactivated if they are likely to be carrying children in the rear outboard seats."

A full listing of the vehicles that are delivered to dealers with their rear side airbags deactivated is not available, but anecdotal accounts would indicate that most vehicles so equipped are delivered with the airbags fully operational. Fear of liability (in the event of a crash in which the bags do not deploy and injuries result, for example) are believed to be among the reasons for this.

Consumers should be strongly encouraged to consult their vehicle owner's manual and child restraint manufacturer's instructions for specific guidance and recommendations.

(from the CPS Listserve)

Head Curtain Airbags

The revised National Standardized Child Passenger Safety Training Program Curriculum, 1/04 contains the following statements:

Module F:

The automotive industry developed voluntary test protocols for assessing the safety risks of the different types of side air bags. Only the current head-only side air bags have met the requirements. Future chest and chest/head combination air bags are expected to comply.

Chest side air bags and chest/head combination side air bags that do not meet the automotive industry voluntary test protocol pose a serious risk to children who are in close proximity to the air bag opening at the time of deployment.

The current head-only side air bags have minimal interaction with and have not shown any safety risks for properly restrained or out-of-position children or adults.

Module I:

There are no studies right now that indicate a child properly restrained in a child restraint is at risk from current side impact or curtain-style air bags, but unrestrained and out-of-position children could be injured.

(from the CPS Listserve)
