

Traveling with Children for the Holidays? Remember to use car seats properly

With Thanksgiving and Christmas soon approaching, families will be traveling by car and airplane to visit with friends and relatives. This is a good time to stop and think about having your child in the proper car seat before you begin to plan your trip. Although parents always want to protect their children, studies show that nationally, 3 out of 4 car seats are not used correctly. For a car seat to best protect your child, it must be one that fits your child, fits your vehicle, and is one that you will use correctly every time you travel. Choose the right seat for your child's age, size, and development; and choose a seat that will fit properly in your vehicle.

Children are at greater risk than adults in a vehicle crash. In fact, motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of death for children. Crash data from the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration show that on average in 2012, nearly two children under the age of 13 were killed and 332 were injured every day while riding in cars, SUVs, pickups, and vans. Unfortunately in 2012, over one third (37%) of children killed in car crashes were not in car seats, booster seats, or seat belts.

That's why Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is urging all parents and caregivers to secure children properly in age- and size-appropriate child safety seats in the back seat of your vehicle, which is the most effective thing you can do to protect them in the event of a crash. In fact, in motor vehicle crashes, child safety seats reduce the risk of fatal injury by 71 percent for infants and by 54 percent for toddlers. Get a free inspection by a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician to make sure you are using the child safety seat correctly. To locate a technician in Texas, go to <http://buckleup.tamu.edu>.

If you are traveling by plane, it is always safest to purchase a separate seat for your child, and bring an FAA-approved car seat. Most car seats, with the exception of booster seats, are approved for use on an airplane. Turbulence is the greatest danger for a child on an airplane trip, and a properly installed car seat can protect your child from injuries due to being thrown around in the plane. Traveling with your car seat will also ensure that you will have it ready for your use when you arrive at your destination.

For a child safety seat to do its job correctly, it has to be:

- Appropriate for your child's age and size,
- Installed properly in your vehicle, and
- Adjusted to fit your child securely.

Parents are reminded to keep children rear-facing until age two or until the limit of their rear-facing convertible seat, usually 35 pounds or more. Also, children should stay in a 5-point harness system until they are mature enough to ride in a booster seat. Booster seats are for children who are at least age four and 40 pounds or more and mature enough to sit still in a booster. Finally, keep children in a booster seat until the vehicle's seat belt fits correctly. This is usually at 4'9" tall and sometime between ages 8 and 12 years old. The average child reaches 4'9" at age 11!

If you're a parent or caregiver, don't miss this opportunity to have a free child safety seat inspection by a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician. Technicians can provide hands-on advice and instruction. Make sure your children are safe and you are in compliance with the

current child safety seat law in Texas. The law requires all children under 8, unless taller than 4'9", to be in a child safety seat system, which includes traditional child safety seats with harnesses and booster seats.

Remember: All child passengers under age 13 should ride securely restrained in the back seat, where they are safest -- every trip, every time.

You may contact the AgriLife Extension Office at 903-473-4580 or visit us at rains.agrilife.org. We are also on Facebook at [Facebook.com/pages/Rains-County-Family-Consumer-Sciences](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Rains-County-Family-Consumer-Sciences). Go and "Like" our page to keep up with the latest news, events, and programs offered by Family & Consumer Sciences in Rains County.

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