



KANSAS

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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KATHLEEN SEBELIUS, GOVERNOR

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Governor touts booster seats during kids' carnival

Appearance comes just minutes after House passes booster bill

TOPEKA, Kan. – Gov. Kathleen Sebelius was promoting seat belt use at a carnival for first- and second-graders Monday, even as the Kansas House was overwhelmingly passing a booster seat law for the first time ever.

Political observers were stunned at the 90-29 vote that advanced the long-sought booster seat bill out of the House of Representatives. The Kansas Senate, traditionally friendlier ground for booster seat boosters, will now consider the bill. If both Houses eventually approve, the bill will be sent to Gov. Sebelius, a supporter of booster seat legislation.

During brief comments to students gathered at the Heritage Hall at the Kansas Expocentre Monday, Sebelius emphasized the importance of the proper use not only of seat belts and booster seats, but of infant and toddler seats as well.

“The easiest and most effective method of protecting children in the event of a crash is to have them properly restrained for their size, weight and age,” Sebelius said. She added that the following four steps keep kids at their safest while traveling:

1. Use rear-facing infant seats in the back seat from birth to at least one year of age and at least 20 pounds;
2. Use forward-facing toddler seats in the back seat from age one and 20 pounds to about age four and 40 pounds;
3. Use booster seats in the back seat from about age four to at least age eight—unless the child is 4’ 9” or taller; and

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4. Use safety belts in the back seat at age eight or older or taller than 4' 9".

The Valentine's Day-eve event was timed to coincide with National Child Passenger Safety Week, Feb. 12 through 18. It was coordinated by the Bureau of Traffic Safety, Kansas Department of Transportation, in cooperation with the Kansas Safety Belt Education Office and other groups. The Kansas Motor Carriers Association used the occasion to announce the donation of 40 child seats and 40 booster seats to the Kansas Highway Patrol, which will distribute them to Kansas motorists.

"This is a way to remind parents and others responsible for transporting children to always use the appropriate restraint," said Pete Bodyk, chief of the KDOT Bureau of Traffic Safety. "There are still a lot of adults who assume that children who have outgrown child safety seats can move right into regular safety belts, but that's not the case. Once they outgrow their child seat, they need to continue to use booster seats until they're over 4'9" tall."

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), only an estimated 10 to 20 percent of children ages 4 to 8 use booster seats. Children in that age group who are in a booster seat are 59 percent less likely to be injured in a car crash than children restrained only by a safety belt, according to a study by Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

"It's unfortunate that many parents who appropriately require their kids to receive booster shots aren't requiring them to use booster seats," Bodyk said.

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