

Child Safety Seat Awareness

Editor's note: the following was submitted by Hiawatha Police Chief John Defore

On April 24, 2016, the OB department of the Hiawatha Community Hospital will be hosting an open house. In conjunction with their open house, they are hosting a Child Safety Check Lane with the Brown Co Sheriff Office, from 1pm to 3pm..

With this event in mind, the Hiawatha Community Hospital has asked the Hiawatha Police Department to assist them by sharing some child safety tips with our community. Rather than simply giving you a bunch of cold hard facts, the following information is meant to aid you in selecting the right car seat for your child.

Selecting a child safety seat can be frustrating and a bit confusing. There are so many variations on the market today it is hard to wade through the plethora of information and sales tactics available. **Remember this; the SAFEST car seat for your child is one that fits your child, fits your car, and is easy for you to use correctly every time.**

Selecting the right seat for your child:

REAR FACING CAR SEAT: The law requires at least 12 months, however, “best practice” is, from birth to at least 24 months your child should always be in a rear facing car seat. (However, we are asking that you leave your child in a rear facing car seat as long as possible and until they reach the weight requirement set by the manufacturer).

FORWARD FACING CAR SEAT WITH HARNESS: Once your child outgrows the rear facing seat, (usually between ages 1-3 years) they are ready to graduate to the forward facing seat and harness system. (We recommend that your child stay in this seat until they reach the height and/or weight requirements set forth by the manufacture).

BOOSTER SEATS WITH LAP-SHOULDER BELT: once your child has outgrown the forward facing car seat (basic rule 4 and 7 years old), it is time to graduate to the booster seat. However, please remember that your child still needs to ride in the back seat. They are not ready for the front seat until after they are 12 years old.

SHOULDER-LAP BELT: once your child has outgrown the booster seat and you are preparing to graduate to the shoulder-lap belt system, the following 5 step test should be utilized.

THE 5 STEP TEST:

Does the child sit all the way against the car seat?

Does the child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the car seat?

Does the belt cross the shoulder between the neck and the arm?

Is the lap belt as low as possible, touching the thighs?

Can the child stay seated like this for the whole trip?

If you answered "NO" to any of these questions, your child should remain in a booster seat until the shoulder and lap belt fits correctly. Your child will be more comfortable. **Remember, the back seat is twice as safe as the front seat.**

The Hiawatha Police Department has partnered with the Brown Co Sheriff Office in a, ZERO TOLERANCE campaign, to make sure that our children and citizens are buckled up. We take the lives of our friends and neighbors to heart every day and are working toward 100% seat belt usage across Hiawatha and all of Brown County.

In 2015, the Hiawatha Police Department worked 90 motor vehicle accidents inside our city limits and 5 of those were injury accidents. This was a decline in injury accidents from 10 in 2014. It is our goal through traffic enforcement to continue to reduce these numbers and to keep our citizens safe.

Should you have any questions, you can always stop by your local police department for advice and guidance. Because of parents like you, child booster seat usage has risen to 83% in Kansas, according to the Kansas Traffic Safety Resource Office. Let's keep up the good work.

The Police department and the Hiawatha Community Hospital, also have Child Abuse awareness pin wheels in our lobby, courtesy of the Brown Co Sheriff, so please stop by anytime.

Respectfully,

John A. Defore

Chief of Police

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