

Protecting Our Kids: Child Passenger Safety in North Carolina

* North Carolina has an excellent child passenger safety law and strong enforcement.

- The law covers all children and youth through age fifteen.
- Violators receive two drivers license points.
- The law was rated among the best in the United States by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.
- Enforcement of this law is a major component of North Carolina's Governor's Highway Safety Initiative. North Carolina law enforcement officers have issued more than 25,000 tickets for child passenger safety law violations since 1993 through the *Click It or Ticket* and *Booze It and Lose It* campaigns.



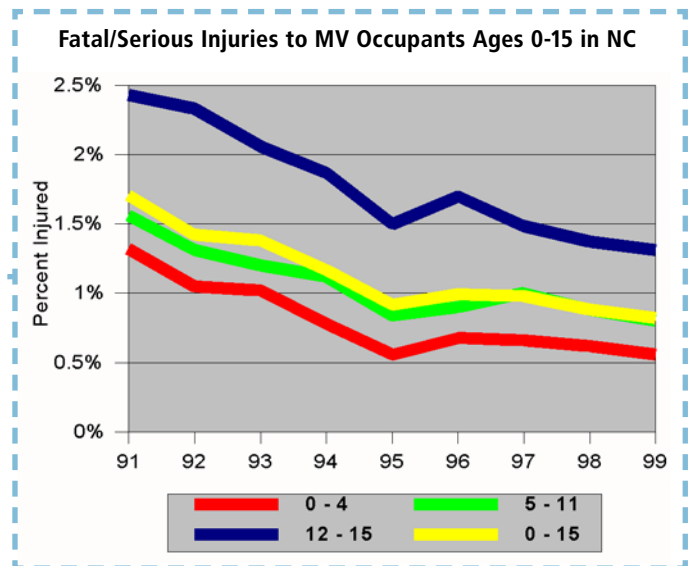
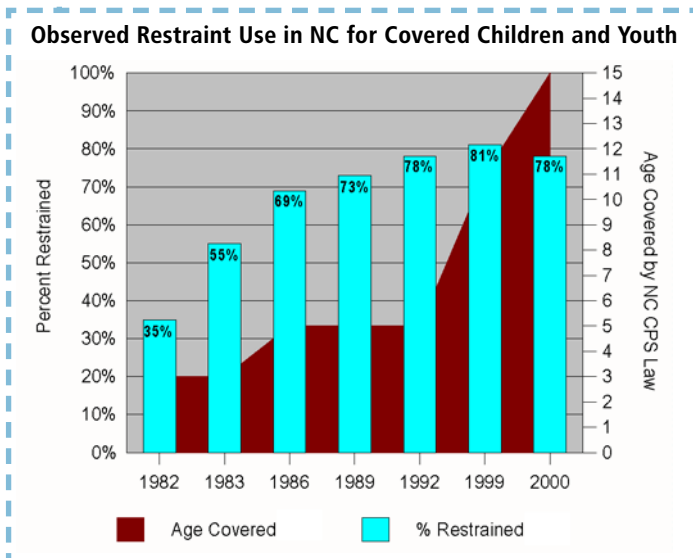
* North Carolina assists parents in protecting their children.

- More than 300 individuals in over 60 North Carolina counties have completed the "Standardized Child Passenger Safety Technical Training," certifying them to teach others proper child safety seat installation and use. These intensive 32+ hour courses are funded by the N.C. Governor's Highway Safety Program and coordinated through the N.C. Department of Insurance Office of the State Fire Marshal.
- More than 500 programs statewide either distribute child restraints to parents on a low-cost or no-cost basis or assist parents with their installation and use.



North Carolina children and youth in crashes:

- Since 1982 when the first child passenger safety law went into effect, restraint use for children covered by the law has increased from approximately 35% to 80%, according to observational surveys conducted by the UNC Highway Safety Research Center.
- The rate of fatal and serious injuries to children through age 15 in motor-vehicle crashes has dropped from 1.71 in 1991 to 0.82 in 1999. These safety improvements can be attributed to enhancements to North Carolina's child passenger safety law, strong enforcement, information and education programs which offer local "hands-on" assistance, and the concern and love of parents and care-givers.
- Parents have heeded the "in the back is where it's at" message. Three-quarters of all children under age 16 were observed appropriately riding in the back seat during recent child restraint surveys conducted by the UNC Highway Safety Research Center.
- Each year between 1991 and 1999, an average of 64 children ages 16 and under were killed in motor-vehicle crashes. An additional 644 children on average were seriously injured each year during that time frame. The good news is that fatality and injury rates during these years steadily declined. If children had continued to be killed or injured throughout this period at the 1991 rate, an additional 300 or more children would have lost their lives or suffered serious injuries during each of these years.



What still needs to be done?

- We need to work together to ensure that all children and youth are buckled up when riding in motor vehicles. Research shows that restraint use decreases as children grow up. NC child restraint surveys show that just six percent of children under 40 pounds ride unbuckled while 20 percent of kids over 40 pounds ride unrestrained. It is hoped that driver license points now issued to violators of the child passenger safety law will help.
- We need to work to ensure that child restraints are properly used. Progress has been made. The "gross misuse" rate has been reduced from 33 percent in the early 1980's to less than ten percent in recent surveys, but all children deserve maximum protection.
- We need to work to prevent premature "graduation" to seat belts. The safest option for children weighing 40 to 60 pounds is the booster seat. Recent child restraint surveys by the UNC Highway Safety Research Center show that among restrained children weighing 40 to 60 pounds, just 16 percent are in booster seats. Over half of children this size are in seat belts, with many wearing them incorrectly.