

ASK THE VEHICLE SAFETY LAWYER - Child Seat Maintenance

How do I insure that my child seat will protect my child in the event of an accident?

I wish I could guarantee that you and your family members would never be seriously injured or killed in a vehicle accident. However, no one can make that guarantee. One way you can protect yourself and your family is to make certain that your safety systems are in proper working order each and every time you get inside your vehicle. A child seat is a safety system and must be checked weekly. Here is how you check your child's child seat.

First, make certain each week that the child seat is still rigidly secured to the vehicle. As the vehicle moves down the road, vibrations and jostling can loosen the straps that attach the child seat to the vehicle. Each week check to see if the child seat will move side-to-side or forward. If it will, tighten the child seat so that it is rigidly secured to the vehicle.

Second, each time you place your child inside his/her child seat, make certain the child seat straps are not twisted or bunched up. The webbing should run through the slots evenly, they should not be folded over. The straps can tear apart in an accident if they are twisted or folded.

Third, make certain the buckle is free of food so that the strap latch plate can properly buckle. In fact, a child seat should be cleaned including its fabric periodically.

Fourth, make certain that the child is securely fastened inside the child seat. This will vary depending on the time of year because of the thickness of clothing. The shoulder and legs straps must be tight but must not be uncomfortable. NEVER WRAP A CHILD IN A BLANKET AND THEN PLACE THEM INSIDE A CHILD SEAT.

Fifth, there are shoulder strap slots at the rear of the child seat. When the child seat is rear facing, always have the shoulder strap slots in the bottom position.

Sixth, in the event of an accident, throw away the child seat if the child was sitting inside the child seat when the accident happened. You may not see any damage to the child seat, but there are hidden features that may render the child seat unsafe in another accident.

Seventh, avoid removing the child seat each time you remove the child. Purchase a child carrier so that you reduce the number of times that you have to re-install the child seat.

Eighth, if the straps to the child seat become stiff because fluid has been spilled on them that cannot be removed, then you need to replace the child seat.