



NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

NLMA infant car seat program celebrates 25th year

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St. John's, NL – This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association's infant car seat program. Each year, physicians of the province provide safe rides home for the first baby born in the New Year at the 10 hospitals that perform deliveries.

NLMA President Dr. Sandra Luscombe said the intent of the NLMA's car seat program is to encourage all parents to use approved car seats for their children from the moment they leave hospital as newborns. To date, more than 295 car seats have been presented to families of newborns.

"The proper use of child safety seats, from the first ride home from the hospital until the child is big enough to use a regular seatbelt, has been proven to be one of the most successful safety innovations for motor vehicles," said Dr. Luscombe.

"The only safe way to keep small children protected in cars is with infant carriers, child seats and booster seats."

It is estimated that every year, more than 70 children are seriously injured in motor vehicle accidents in this province. In 2005, the NLMA released a position paper in partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Public Health Association, the Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador and Kids in Safe Seats Inc., calling on government to upgrade its child booster seat legislation.

The paper, entitled *Child Passenger Safety in Newfoundland and Labrador*, recommended mandatory legislation to ensure that children between ages four and eight, weighing between 40 and 80lbs and a standing height of less than 145 cm (4.7 feet), be properly secured in booster seats in the back seat of a vehicle.

In this age group, booster seats are the safest way to position a seat belt correctly over a child's body. When a child is restrained properly in a booster seat, which is appropriate to their height and weight, they are much less likely to suffer serious injury or die in the event of a crash.

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Representing and supporting physicians in Newfoundland and Labrador and providing leadership in the promotion of good health and the provision of quality health care to the people of the province.

On June 7, 2007, government responded by amending the recommendations to the *Highway Traffic Act*. Effective July 1, 2008, the legislation requires all children to be in a booster seat while they are being transported in a car, passenger truck, taxi, vehicles used by day cares and school contract vehicles.

The NLMA supports this legislation, as booster seats may help reduce crash-related injuries to young passengers by 70 per cent and the risk of death by 90 percent.

“Children aged four to eight often graduate too soon to seat belts, increasing their risk of injuries, disability and death. The new booster legislation will ensure that parents pay closer attention to how they place their child in the seat and ensure the seats are being used as they were designed,” said Dr. Luscombe, adding that the safest place for children under 12 years of age is in the back seat of the vehicle, away from dangers such as front-on collisions and front-seat airbags.

The NLMA would like to acknowledge the retailers who have generously donated seats over the years for the babies born in their communities, in particular, Wal-Mart stores in Clarenville, Corner Brook, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, Labrador City, Marystown and St. John's West - Kelsey Dr. store for the Health Sciences Centre, St. John's East - Aberdeen Ave. store for Curtis Memorial Hospital in St. Anthony and the Mount Pearl store for LeGrow Health Care Centre in Port-aux-Basques, along with Goose Sales/Home Hardware in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Crosstown Express, who collected the seats in St. John's and Sameday-Right-O-Way/Day and Ross, who shipped the seats to St. Anthony and Port-aux-Basques.

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