Free Child Safety Seat Inspections

Seventy-three percent of car seats are not used or installed correctly, so before you hit the road, check your car seat. The Lake Metroparks Ranger Department has a certified technician who can discuss and demonstrate proper harnessing and installation techniques for both rear-facing and forward-facing child safety seats and will make sure you know how to install the child safety seat in your vehicle. Emphasis is also placed on booster seats for those children who are too big for a harnessed child safety seat, but too small to fit in a vehicle seat belt. These free inspections are conducted by appointment only and can be scheduled with Ranger Brandy Hanususky at 440-358-7290 or bhanususky@lakemetroparks.com.

At right: properly secured rear-facing and forward-facing car seats.

Car Seat Safety Guidelines

- Correctly used child safety seats can reduce the risk of death by as much as 71%.
- Select a car seat based on your child's age and size, choose a seat that fits in your vehicle and use it every time.
- Always refer to your specific car seat manufacturer's instructions (check height and weight limits) and read the vehicle owner's manual on how to install the car seat using the seat belt or lower anchors and a tether, if available.
- To maximize safety, keep your child in the car seat for as long as possible (as long as the child fits within the manufacturer's height and weight requirements).
- Keep your child in the back seat at least through age 12.
- Obtain a used car seat only if you know its full crash history. This means you must get it from someone you know, not from a thrift store or over the Internet. Once a car seat has been in a crash or is expired or broken, it needs to be replaced.

Rear-facing Infant Seats: Birth to 12 Months

Any child younger than 12 months of age should always ride in a rear-facing car seat. There are different types of rear-facing car seats:
- Infant-only seats can only be used rear-facing.
- Convertible and all-in-one car seats typically have higher height and weight limits for the rear-facing position, allowing you to keep your child rear-facing longer.

Convertible/Forward-facing Car Seats

1 to 3 Years

Keep your child rear-facing as long as possible, as it is the best way to keep him/her safe. Your child should remain in a rear-facing car seat until he/she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by your car seat's manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the rear-facing car seat, he/she is ready to travel in a forward-facing car seat with a harness and tether.

4 to 7 Years

Keep your child in a forward-facing car seat with a harness and tether until he/she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by your car seat's manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the forward-facing car seat with a harness, it's time to travel in a booster seat, but still in the back seat.

Booster Seat: 8 to 12 Years

Children seated in a booster seat in the back seat of the car are 45% less likely to be injured in a crash than children using a seat belt alone. When your child is seated in the booster seat, make sure the lap and shoulder belts fit. The lap belt should fit low across the hips and the shoulder belt across the shoulder. Do not place the shoulder belt under the child's arm or behind the child's back. Generally, kids need to use a booster until they are at least 4 feet 9 inches tall and weigh between 80 and 100 pounds. For most kids, they will be between ages 8 to 12 years old.

Seat Belt: 8 to 12 Years

Safety belt fit test:
- The child's knees should bend at the edge of the seat when his or her back and bottom are against the vehicle seat back.
- The vehicle lap belt must lie across the upper thighs, not the stomach.
- The shoulder belt should fit across the shoulder and chest and not cross the neck or face.
- Remember: your child should still ride in the back seat because it's safer there. When adults wear seat belts, kids wear seat belts. So be a good example and buckle up for every ride. Be sure everyone in the vehicle buckles up too.