

Facts on Kids in South Dakota

Use of child restraint systems & Adolescent safety belt use



Issue No. 3 Qtr 00

Data and information in this issue are from the South Dakota Department of Transportation, the SD CODES Project and the South Dakota Coalition for Children (SDCC). More information about these sources can be found at the end of the issue.

A note about the use of the word "accident".

The State & Territorial Injury Prevention Directors Association (STIPDA), in 1998, passed a resolution to eliminate the term "accident", when referring to motor vehicle collisions, and utilize the term "crash". This was based, in part, on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) announcement that it wants to educate the public that motor vehicle injury is preventable. The reasoning is that unintentional injury is a major source of trauma in the United States and motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of unintentional injury. By replacing the term "accident" with the more accurate term "crash" motorists may begin to recognize that motor vehicle injury is preventable. For more information log on to:

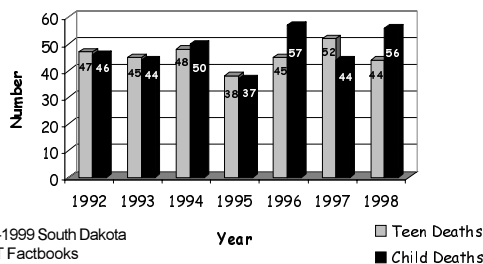
www.injuryprevention.org/stipda/resol/98term.htm

Introduction

This is the third in a series of **Facts on Kids in South Dakota**. Each issue takes a look at a specific indicator of child well being. Data and state and federal legislation will be discussed to provide the reader with a broad yet in-depth view of the state of children and youth in South Dakota. The focus of this issue is the use of child restraint systems and adolescent safety belts.

The following chart shows the number of child and teen deaths in the state for 1993 through 1998.

Number of child and teen deaths by year



Source: 1993-1999 South Dakota KIDS COUNT Factbooks

It is important to examine the causes of death of children and teens. Deaths from accidents, homicides, or suicides are potentially preventable. These deaths can also be a measure of the ability of teenagers to make safe and healthy choices regarding their lives. Motor vehicle accidents account for more than half of teen deaths. The leading cause of child deaths is motor vehicle crashes.

Safety equipment & children under age 5

Since 1984 when South Dakota's Child Passenger Restraint law took effect, there have been 36 deaths to occupants under age 5. There were 130 children under age 5 injured in 1999, compared to 118 in 1998.

The following chart shows the number of fatalities and injuries to motor vehicle occupants under age 5 for 1999.

1999 fatalities and injuries to children under 5 years of age by safety equipment used		
	Fatalities	Injuries
No safety equipment	0	35
Lap belt only	0	10
Shoulder harness only	0	0
Lap belt/shoulder harness	0	29
Child restraint used properly	1	46
Child restraint not used properly	0	4
Other	0	0
Not known or stated	0	6
Total	1	130

Child booster seats

Once children outgrow their forward-facing child safety seats many parents mistakenly believe that an adult seat belt is good enough. The reality is that all children between about 40 to 80 lbs. and less than 4'9" tall should be in a booster seat. Adult seat belts can be dangerous when used alone if the child is too small. A child who cannot sit with his or her back straight against the vehicle seat back cushion, with knees bent over a vehicle's seat edge without slouching, needs a booster seat. The shoulder belt



cuts across their necks and the lap belt rides up into their soft bellies. In a crash, this can cause serious or even fatal injuries. A booster seat positions the adult-designed seat belt correctly and safely – and offers children greater comfort and visibility.

Parents can have their child safety seats inspected by a trained and certified technician in their community. To locate a certified technician in your area, contact Marianne Gabriel, SD Office of Highway Safety, at (605) 773-4493 or e-mail address Marianne.Gabriel@state.sd.us.

Federal Legislation

On September 1, 1999 a new Federal motor vehicle safety standard required motor vehicle manufacturers to provide motorists with a new way of installing child restraints. Vehicles [passenger cars, except convertibles] will be equipped with child restraint anchorage systems that are standardized and independent of the vehicle seat belts. Beginning September 1, 2000, all new vehicles, including light trucks, minivans, and SUV's will be equipped with the top tether attachment mounting.

An easy-to-use anchoring system that is independent of the vehicle seat belts makes a more effective child restraint thereby increasing child safety. The top tether strap helps limit movement of a child's head in a forward crash and reduces the risk of injury.

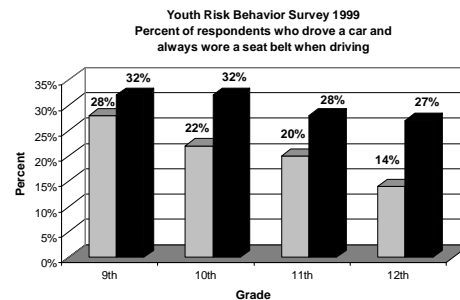
Passenger Restraint of Children and the Law

As of July 1, 1998, all children under the age of 5, who do not weigh at least 40 pounds, are required to be in an infant only, toddler or booster child safety seat. This amended South Dakota law applies to all drivers, regardless of what state they are licensed in. Children covered by the law may not be removed from the seat for any reason while the vehicle is moving.

Groups throughout South Dakota provide child safety seats to families in need. Funding is provided, through the Governor's Child Safety Seat Distribution Program. Currently, there are 74 agencies distributing child safety seats to low income families in South Dakota. To locate an distributing agency in your area, contact Marianne Gabriel, SD Office of Highway Safety, at (605) 773-4493 or e-mail address Marianne.Gabriel@state.sd.us.

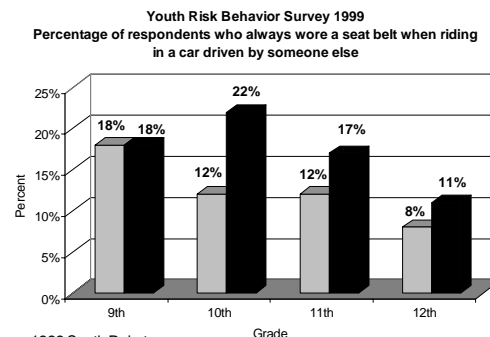
Adolescent Safety Belt Use

In 1999, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) added a question asking who always wore a seat belt when driving a car. Twenty-five percent responded that they always wore a seat belt when driving a car. The following chart shows responses by grade level for male and female respondents.



Source: 1999 South Dakota Youth Risk Behavior Survey.
 □ Male ■ Female

The percentage of respondents who always wore a seat belt when riding in a car driven by someone else was 15%. The responses by grade level for male and female respondents showed the following:



Source: 1999 South Dakota Youth Risk Behavior Survey.
 □ Male ■ Female

Seat Belt Use for Teens/Adults: The Law

South Dakota has a secondary enforcement safety belt law that applies only to front seat occupants of passenger vehicles. This includes any passenger seated in the middle of the front seat. The safety belt law requires the safety belt system to be properly fastened and adjusted.

South Dakota's law provides for several exceptions to the requirement to wear safety belts. They include:

- If your vehicle was manufactured before September 1, 1973;
- If you have a written statement from your doctor describing a medical reason why you should not wear a safety belt;

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- If you are a passenger in a vehicle that was not equipped with safety belts because federal law didn't require them when it was manufactured;
- Any person delivering periodicals or newspapers on an assigned home delivery route or if you are a rural mail carrier for the United States Postal Service, while delivering mail.

Crash Outcome Data Evaluation System information on injuries and hospital charges



The Crash Outcome Data Evaluation System (CODES) project links South Dakota accident records with other databases to get a clearer picture of crash data in the state. Crashes tell a portion of the story. The CODES project links hospital charges associated with injuries from crashes to the data as well. The following chart shows the average hospital charges of crashes where no safety equipment was used and when some type of safety equipment was used. The combined 1995 and 1996 data is broken out by age group and whether the person was driving or a passenger.

Driver Safety Equipment Usage **Average Hospital Charges 1995 & 1996**

Age	No safety equip. used <u>Average</u>	Safety equip. used* <u>Average</u>
11 - 15	\$3,998	\$1,077
16 - 20	\$2,482	\$1,035

Passenger Safety Equipment Usage **Average Hospital Charges 1995 & 1996**

Age	No safety equip. used <u>Average</u>	Safety equip. used* <u>Average</u>
6 - 10	\$2,005	\$ 881
11 - 15	\$2,307	\$1,340
16 - 20	\$2,713	\$ 646

*Includes Lap Belt Only, Shoulder Harness Only, & Lap Belt & Shoulder Harness

For the years of 1995 and 1996, the average hospitals charges appear to indicate that using safety equipment when involved in a crash will result in a lower cost injury.



South Dakota Coalition for Children Proactive Steps for Children's Safety

To ensure the safety of our children and teens, there are several steps that South Dakotans can take. The South Dakota Coalition for Children recommends:

1. Always secure your child in a proper child restraint that is securely anchored in the back seat when traveling in a motor vehicle.
2. Always buckle **your** seat belt when traveling in a motor vehicle. This ensures your safety and sends a powerful message to your children.
3. As your child grows use an appropriate child restraint system or booster seat for motor vehicle travel.
4. Require your teenager to buckle up when traveling in a motor vehicle.
5. Establish a standard that all passengers in your car must buckle up when traveling with you.
6. Support legislation requiring all passengers to wear safety belts when traveling in passenger vehicles.

Using seat belts and proper child restraints in motor vehicle travel saves lives and reduces the risk of injury to children and adults.

Protect a life - buckle up!

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Youth related traffic accidents data is from the Department of Transportation, Accident Records Office. 1999 South Dakota Motor Vehicle Traffic Accident Summary.
www.state.sd.us/dot/publicat.htm

The Crash Outcome Data Evaluation System (CODES) project links South Dakota accident records with other databases to get a clearer picture of accidents in the state.
www.usd.edu/brbinfo

The South Dakota KIDS COUNT Project is a national and state-by-state effort, sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, to track the status of children in the United States. By providing policymakers and citizens with benchmarks of child well-being, KIDS COUNT seeks to enrich local, state, and national discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for children and families. Additional funding for the state project comes from the South Dakota Departments of: Education and Cultural Affairs, Health, Human Services and Social Services.
www.usd.edu/brbinfo then follow the KIDS COUNT link

The South Dakota Coalition for Children (SDCC) is an advocacy organization that strives to shape policies and programs to ensure the well being of all children in South Dakota. The Coalition is composed of businesses, state and local organizations, and individual members. The SDCC is a member of the National Association of Child Advocates (NACA). The Coalition can be reached at P.O. Box 2246, Sioux Falls, SD 57101-2246, phone: 605.367.9667. www.sdcchildren.org

Additional sources for information:
www.safekids.org/
www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/childps/
www.injuryprevention.org

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