

Traffic safety tip: child safety and air bags

There has been some questions about what age is appropriate for a child to safely sit in the front seat of a car. Generally, age is less important; height and weight of the child determine the type of restraint that is appropriate.

Most cars are now equipped with both driver and passenger side airbags. Airbags are a safety feature designed to complement the passenger restraint system in the event of a crash.

Children who are in safety seats or boosters, be they rear or forward facing, are safest in the back seat of a motor vehicle. From national data, those children who have been killed or injured by airbags, almost all have been in safety seats too close to deploying front seat airbags. Since this data was released in the late 1990's manufacturers have installed sensors that will disable the passenger airbag if the weight on the seat is under a threshold. While these safety measures are designed to work in the event of a crash, you should always put a child in the appropriate safety seat for their height and weight, and place them in a back seat.

Children who do ride in the front seat must be properly restrained by using the entire lap and shoulder harness. Place the seat as far back as possible to allow the airbag to deploy safely in the event of a collision.

If you have any questions about child safety seating or the appropriate use of child restraints, drop by your local police station, and an officer will be happy to assist you.

Remember, seat belts (and airbags) save lives!