



For Immediate Release: 03.19.10

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Fire Department offers child safety seat inspection appointment hotline

The Oak Park Fire Department has set up a special telephone line to accept requests for child safety seat inspections.

Parents of young children can call 708.358.5604 to request an appointment for a car seat inspection by one of the Fire Department's certified technicians. Requests also can be sent by e-mail to fire@oak-park.us.

A Fire Department car seat technician will follow up each request for an appointment within 48 hours. Parents will need to bring their vehicle owner's manual and car seat manufacturer's manual along with the seat they wish to have inspected.

Residents are asked not to come to the Fire Department for an inspection without an appointment. As on-call firefighter/paramedics, the technicians may not be available if duty calls.

In the meantime, fire officials say the best child safety seat is the one that correctly fits the child and the vehicle, and is used correctly every time. To help keep small children safe in a motor vehicle, follow these general guidelines:

- Always place infants one year old or younger, and 20 pounds or less, in rear-facing seats until they are at least one year old and weigh 20 pounds or more. Children weighing up to 35 pounds may ride in properly approved rear-facing seats.
- Never place a rear-facing infant seat in front of a passenger air bag.
- Keep children riding in a toddler seat until they reach 40 pounds.
- Properly restrain children who have outgrown child safety seats in booster seats until at least eight years old, unless they are four-feet, nine inches tall or taller and can safely use a regular seat belt.
- Read both the vehicle owner's manual and the instructions that come with the child safety seat to ensure proper installation.
- Do not use old child safety seats unless you are certain they have never been in a crash and you have all parts, including installation instructions.
- Discard seats six years old or older.
- Check for safety seat recalls at www.seatcheck.org.
- Kids of all ages are safest when properly restrained in the back seat.

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