



WATERTOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT
TRAFFIC DIVISION
(617)972-6547



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Dear Parents,

It has long been a goal of the Watertown Police Traffic Division to make the children of Watertown safer. One major problem that we have encountered has been the lack of knowledge and/or the awareness with regards to child safety seats and the laws that govern them. It is our hope that this letter will help clarify the Massachusetts child passenger laws and the proper seat for the appropriate age, weight and height.

Massachusetts Child Passenger Safety Law

- Children under the age of 5 years old and weigh less than 40 pounds must ride in a child safety seat.
- A passenger in a motor vehicle on any way who is under the age of 8 shall be fastened and secured by a child passenger restraint, unless such passenger measures more than 57 inches in height.
- A police officer can stop your car if a child 12 and under is not properly restrained.

Infants: Birth to 1 Year:

- Infant only or convertible safety seats should be rear facing. The car seat should be secured with either the car's safety belt or the use of the LATCH system (if your car is fitted with it).
- The chest clip should be at the armpit level.
- Your baby should be rear facing until at least the age of 1 and weight of 20 pounds.

Toddlers: Older than 1 and more than 20 pounds:

- Use a top Tether if your car and car seat are both equipped. Tethers limit the forward motion of your child's head in a crash.
- A child is too big for the seat when the shoulders are above the top slots, the ears are above the back of the seat or the weight limit of the safety seat is exceeded. The weight limit is typically found on the side of the safety seat.
- Many children will outgrow the harness of a forward facing car seat at the age of 4 or 5 years of age

Boosters: under the age of 8 and less than 57 inches in height:

- A passenger in a motor vehicle on any way who is under the age of 8 shall be fastened and secured by a child passenger restraint, unless such passenger measures more than 57 inches in height.
- A booster seat uses no harness. It uses the car's lap and shoulder belts only.
- **NEVER** use a lap only belt.

PROPER INSTALLATION NOTE: The car seat should not move more than 1 inch from side to side (not including the Booster style seat). The best way to check this is by grabbing the car seat where the seat belt or latch pass through and give it a tug. If it moves more than an inch side to side it is not fitted properly and needs to be tightened.

The Watertown Police offer Child Seat Safety checkpoints that are scheduled on a monthly basis. Officer Samios, Officer Parent and Officer Martin are certified Child Passenger Technicians and will be available to assist with installations, child safety seat inspections, and also to educate the caregiver on child passenger safety. Attendance is by appointment only, so please call 617-972-6594 to be scheduled for the next checkpoint.