

New rules boost children's safety

**Ministry of Children and Family Development
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General**

B.C. children will be better protected in the event of a motor vehicle crash with changes to child passenger safety regulations that make booster seats mandatory, said Linda Reid, Minister of State for Childcare, and Iain Black, MLA for Port Moody-Westwood.

"When children are put in adult seatbelts too soon, they are at much greater risk during crashes," said Reid. "This regulation change, combined with an increased booster seat awareness campaign, will reduce injuries and save lives."

Starting July 1 next year, booster seats will be mandatory for all children at least 40 pounds until they are 4'9" tall or age nine. Other changes to Motor Vehicle Act regulations dealing with child restraints include: children over one year old and between 20-40 pounds will need to be secured in a child seat, regardless of who is driving the vehicle; and infant seats must be used until the baby is at least one year of age and 20 pounds. The seat must also be rear facing and not placed in front of an active frontal airbag.

"New rules were needed because B.C.'s laws around child restraints are 22 years old and out of step with current research," said Black. "Booster seats reduce the risk of fatality by 71 per cent and the risk of serious injury by 67 per cent. It only makes sense to make these changes on behalf of all B.C. children."

Black has worked over the past year with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General to make amendments to child restraint laws, including holding extensive consultations with parents and other stakeholders.

Additional changes to MVA regulations also remove a number of exemptions. All drivers, not just the child's parents or guardians, will now have to use child restraints, as will drivers of rental vehicles, out-of-province vehicles and passenger vans. Failure to comply with these new regulations will result in a \$109 fine.

"Car crashes are the leading cause of injury and death for children in B.C.," said Solicitor General John Les. "An average of 860 children aged 5-9 are seriously injured every year and five are killed. Yet, currently only about 18 per cent of kids in B.C. use booster seats. We're making changes to enhance booster seat use because, quite simply, it is the responsible thing to do."

To create awareness and increase booster seat use in B.C., the government has also announced that the British Columbia Automobile Association Traffic Safety Foundation will receive a \$250,000 one-time grant to support its Provincial Booster Seat Public Education Strategy.


"Booster seats save lives," said Allan Lamb, executive director for BCAA TSF. "This new funding will improve our ability to get the message out to all parents in B.C. about the regulation change and the importance of booster seats."

Currently, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia and 39 states in the U.S. all have booster seat laws.

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