

Protecting Our Children

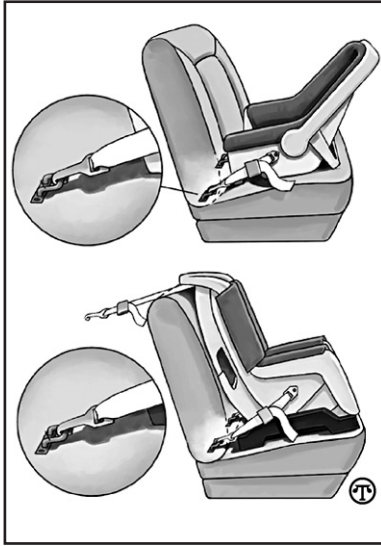
New Restraint System Makes Child Safety Seats Easier For Parents

(NAPSA)—Every day, children sustain serious injuries and die in motor vehicle crashes. In fact, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 80 percent of child safety seats are installed and/or used incorrectly, leading to 68 deaths and 874 injuries each year. Many of these injuries and deaths can be avoided, yet many adults are unaware they are using safety restraints incorrectly, thereby placing children at risk.

Any parent who has struggled with installing a child safety seat knows how difficult it can be. However, parents are now getting some relief. As of Sept. 1, 2002, all new vehicles and child safety seats must have attachments designed to make them hook together—without the use of the vehicle's seat belts to secure the restraint. Instead, it uses vehicle anchors and child restraint attachments to do this.

The new system, called LATCH—Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children—consists of two rigid lower anchors and a top tether anchor to secure a LATCH-equipped child safety seat. The lower anchors are normally located between the seat back and seat cushion. Typically, the top tether anchor is located on or behind the rear seat. The vehicle owner's manual identifies the location of each of these anchors and provides instructions on their proper use.

Rear-facing child restraints equipped with LATCH typically use the lower anchors, while for-



A new restraint system on all new cars and child seats will make installation easier.

ward-facing seats use the lower anchors and the top tether anchor.

Automaker, General Motors has announced an extensive effort to educate millions of parents and caregivers and its 8,000-dealer network on how this new child restraint attachment system works. GM has created a printable brochure and an animated video, posted on www.gmability.com, that demonstrates the LATCH system to parents and caregivers. GM also will provide dealers with printed materials for distribution to customers. In addition, the GM owner's manual contains extensive information about LATCH and how to properly install child restraints.

“You can still safely restrain your child even if your vehicle or child safety restraint is not LATCH-equipped,” says Artie Martin, a GM staff project engineer and nationally recognized industry authority on child passenger safety. “The key is correctly installing the restraint, and correctly restraining the child in the seat once it is installed.”

Martin adds that although LATCH is a more convenient feature, it is still not foolproof. Parents still must properly restrain children in the safety seat itself and carefully follow the weight and age guidelines for their particular seat.

Martin emphasizes that, for vehicles or child restraints without the LATCH system, parents should continue to properly position and install the child restraint using the vehicle's safety belt system. She reminds families that children must always be properly secured within the child restraint.

Children are safer when properly restrained in a vehicle's back seat. GM began implementing the LATCH top tether anchor in 1999 and had been phasing in the lower anchor LATCH components in subsequent model years.

It is important that all parents carefully read their vehicle owner's manual and child seat manufacturer's instructions for proper installation of their child seat. To learn more about GM's child passenger safety leadership, you can visit www.gmability.com or www.ourpreciouscargo.com.