

Roadside Safety Checks

Guidelines Child Occupant Restraints Roadside Safety Checks

These guidelines have been developed to outline the expectations and to clarify roles for those who participate in a Roadside Safety Check focusing on child safety restraints. These guidelines apply only to the Roadside Safety Checks and do not apply to;

- “Check Stops” of the Alberta Impaired Driving Program,
- Car Seat Inspection Clinics or
- Education Sessions, Option Four sessions (Think...Think Again)

Purpose

The primary purpose of a Roadside Safety Check is to identify drivers who are transporting children in an unsafe manner by identifying major misuses or non-use of child restraint(s). This is an enforcement activity where offenders will be charged and receive a ticket(s). Safety Checks operate under the direction of the local enforcement agency.

Roles

Enforcement officers are responsible for enforcing all aspects of the law and are in charge of all traffic issues including traffic flow at the site. Ultimately it is the officer’s decision as to whether or not a ticket is issued. Evaluations have shown that it is the ticket(s) that encourage people to attend the education sessions. Should a ticket be contested in court, the officer will be called to testify and can attest to the expert input of health services workers at the Roadside Safety Check.

Health services workers or trained volunteers with expertise in the area of child restraints, are responsible for consulting with and providing support to the members in determining major misuses or non-uses of child restraint(s). In rare circumstances health services workers may be called to court to give evidence.

Definitions

Child Restraint - A Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (CMVSS) approved device designed for the use of correctly restraining children up to 18 kilograms (40 pounds). This also includes the use of the vehicle safety belt system or approved booster seats after 18 kilograms (40 pounds).

STEP - Selective Traffic Enforcement Program - A traffic enforcement initiative that targets a specific issue, such as occupant restraints or impaired driving programs. STEP campaigns strategically combine education and enforcement activities to increase public compliance to the targeted issue

Roadside Safety Check - An enforcement activity designed to enforce the law and provide a brief check of a child restraint for major misuse, a secondary outcome of this activity is to promote education and awareness. For those drivers who have failed to restrain or correctly restrain child occupants under the age of 16, they are provided with the ticket(s) and provided information on the “Option 4”.

Education Session - A class held for drivers who have received the “Option 4” which provides information to drivers/parents on the correct and safe use of their child restraints. Upon completion of the session, tickets are recommended to be withdrawn. These sessions may be open to the public depending on location. The ticketed driver must attend in order to have the ticketed recommended for withdrawal.

Option 4 - An additional option given to a ticketed driver that allows him/her to attend an education session rather than pay a ticket for mis/non-use of a child restraint. The usual three options are to pay the ticket, plead not guilty by mail or plead not guilty in court.

Inspection Clinic - An education activity designed to provide parents/care givers with information and hands-on skill development on how to correctly use a child restraint. This is a community education activity.

Misuse - A child safety seat or vehicle seat belt system not used correctly. This would include not following manufacturer instructions for either the restraint or the vehicle.

Non-Use - A child occupant under the age of 16 not restrained by the vehicle seat belt system or appropriate child restraint system. (i.e children traveling unrestrained in a vehicle)

Equipment For Enforcement Officers and Alberta Health Services Workers

- Visible, readable name tags;
- Safety vests (allows enforcement officers to more readily identify health services staff);
- Clothing for all kinds of weather conditions;
- Option 4's - enforcement officers have these pads with them;
- Cheat cards - enforcement vehicles should have one;
- Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation “Child Safety Seat” pamphlet, (revised Feb 2002)
- One page rear/forward facing information sheets (www.albertaseatbelts.ca)
- “Yes Tests” rear, forward and booster seats – (www.albertaseatbelts.ca)

Process

1. Enforcement members approach all vehicles and determine which vehicles will be approached by Alberta Health Services staff for inspection.
2. Health professionals complete a visual inspection to identify major misuses of the child

restraint or the child in a seat belt system. Key questions will be asked regarding the age and weight of the child.

3. Health professional identifies error in use of child restraint and will consult with the enforcement member on the identified errors.
4. Member makes visual check to confirm health worker assessment. If the situation warrants and the driver is interested, health professionals may provide information/direction to assist in making minor changes, such as reposition seat belt system, readjust chest clip, and discuss proper child safety seat installation procedures. Do not make the adjustments yourself but rather have the driver/client do it under the direction of the health professional.
5. Enforcement officer issues ticket(s).
6. Once ticket is issued, the member discusses:
 - Option 4
 - The three month time frame on the ticket(s) - the first month is to find a session, the second month is to attend a session and the third month provides time for the paperwork to arrive at the courthouse.
 - Provide written information the Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation brochure or the one page rear/forward facing seat diagram with a business card attached.
7. Should time permit and the driver be open to receiving additional information the Health professionals may discuss details of the Education Session and other opportunities for a more detailed inspection.

Reminders

1. In a Roadside Safety Check a driver is not voluntarily submitting their vehicle for inspection; the driver is required to comply to the direction of a peace officer. Under these circumstances a driver or passenger may appear to be upset. If a health professional observes an upset driver or passenger, let the enforcement officer take charge. They are trained to handle this type of situation. A driver who is unhappy to begin with is more likely to file a complaint against you or take exception to what you have done.
2. From a liability perspective, it is important to remember that child occupant restraints fall under the Traffic Safety Act, Vehicle Equipment Regulations. As such, these violations are no different than other equipment violations. If minor corrections are required, it may be acceptable to have the driver/care givers make the corrections at the Roadside Safety Check but it is not acceptable to take the seat out of the vehicle, take it apart and make major adjustments on site. These drivers should be directed to make the major

corrections as soon as possible at a safe location. Major corrections should be corrected and discussed at inspection clinics, education sessions, health clinics or at home but not at road side. Drivers or care givers should be provided guidance regarding where they can receive information or assistance and it is their responsibility to seek out that information and make the changes. We cannot accept responsibility for other people's behavior.

3. Checklists normally used at an inspection clinic should not be used in a Roadside Safety Check. Inspection Clinic Checklists are designed to be used in situations where clients have voluntarily come in to have their child restraints checked and generally take 20 – 30 minutes to complete.
4. Roadside Safety Checks are an excellent opportunity to partner and communicate to the public our coordinated efforts to reduce motor vehicle injuries while demonstrating a whole community approach to traffic safety. Roadside Safety Checks optimize community resources and experts.
5. This safety check process will be reviewed and revised annually.

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