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N E W S

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OHIO’S CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY LAW CHANGING

Every child younger than 8 or less than 4 feet 9 inches must use booster seats effective Oct. 7

COLUMBUS – Ohio’s roadways are about to become safer for children.

Effective Oct. 7, children younger than 8, unless they are at least 4 feet 9 inches tall, must use a booster seat. This new law – combined with existing law requiring children younger than 4 years and less than 40 pounds to use a child safety seat; and children 8 to 15 to use a safety seat or seat belt – will make traveling safer for Ohio’s children, said Ohio Department of Health Director Alvin D. Jackson, M.D.

“Seat belts were designed for adults – not children,” he said. “Now, children in vehicles will be better protected from the hazards of the road.”

At least 34 Ohio children between 4 and 7 died in motor vehicle traffic crashes between 1999 and 2006 and traffic is the leading cause of death for this age group. And, in 2007, only 18 percent of Ohio children ages 4 to 8 used a booster, according to Partners for Child Passenger Safety.

Law enforcement will issue warnings only beginning Oct. 7. Full enforcement will begin April 7, 2010, with fines ranging from \$25 to \$75 per violation.

“This has helped Ohio take a significant step toward ensuring all of our young motor vehicle passengers are safe on our roads,” said Ohio Department of Public Safety Director Cathy Collins-Taylor. “The six-month warning period is a critical time for education regarding this new law and we are encouraging all of our safety partners to help educate the public about the law, where to purchase a booster seat and what to do if you are unsure.”

“Don’t wait for a warning or a ticket,” Jackson said. “Help protect your children today by buying a booster seat.”

NOTE: The Ohio Buckles Buckeyes (OBB) program provides child safety seats to eligible low-income Ohioans and has distributed more than 20,000 child safety and booster seats in the past five years. Call 1-800-755-GROW (4769) to find the OBB program nearest you. In October, some 2,300 high-back, belt-positioning booster seats will be available for distribution to eligible low-income families.

Ohio’s child restraint law is defined in Ohio Revised Code 4511.81 <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/4511.81>.