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**NEWS RELEASE**



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## **Attorney General Urges Drivers To Check Child Safety Devices During Child Passenger Safety Week**

(Juneau, AK) –Attorney General Gregg Renkes sent a memo to Alaska law enforcement personnel asking them to give extra attention to child safety device laws in recognition of Child Passenger Safety Week, which runs February 8 to 14. The memo was partially in response to concerns expressed by the public about enforcement of child safety restraint laws. Car accidents are the leading cause of death for children ages 2 to 14. Many of these lives can be saved by properly using child car restraints.

“We all need to stop and ask ourselves whether we are making the extra effort to keep our children safe,” Renkes said. “I urge parents to make sure their children are buckled into the proper type of safety seat before even starting the car. Child safety seats save lives.”

“We cannot stress enough how important it is for children to use the proper safety device in the car,” added Colonel Julia Grimes, Director of the Alaska State Troopers. “It is important for everyone to wear their seatbelts, but it is especially important for children.”

Child safety seats in passenger cars reduce the risk of death by 71 percent for infants, and by 54 percent for toddlers. Children ages 4 to 7 who use booster seats are 59 percent less likely to be injured in a car accident than children restrained only by a safety belt.

Sadly, children who are in safety seats are often still injured during car accidents because they are in the wrong type of seat or the seat is installed improperly. More than 81 percent of child restraints are used incorrectly, including 88 percent of forward-facing toddler seats, 86 percent of rear-facing infant seats, and 85 percent of safety belts.

“We are doing more to educate the public and law enforcement about the need to comply with and enforce our child restraint safety laws,” Renkes noted.

There are organizations in Alaska to help parents and caregivers check the installation of safety seats and answer questions. SAFE KIDS is an organization whose goal is to reduce the number of unintentional injury and deaths in children under the age of 14. For the Anchorage SAFE KIDS coalition, call 261-3194; in Juneau call 465-8632; in Fairbanks call 458-5585; in Kodiak call 486-9569, in Seward and Palmer call 352-2849; and on the Kenai Peninsula call 235-0285.

Children age 12 and under should ride in the back seat of a car, even when using car safety seats. Infants should ride in rear-facing car seats from birth to at least one year (or 20 pounds) before moving to a forward-facing toddler seat, which they can stay in until they are about age four, or 40 pounds. People often believe that children who outgrow their safety seats should use safety belts. However, safety belts are designed for adults and will not fully restrain many children in an accident. Children should ride in booster seats from age four (or 40 pounds) until age 8, unless they are 4'9" or taller. Unfortunately, studies show that only 10 to 20 percent of children who should be in booster seats actually use them.

Law enforcement officers can stop a vehicle if they have reasonable suspicion that a driver is violating the child safety device law, which is codified in the Alaska Statutes at (AS 28.05.095). A driver convicted of violating that law may be fined \$50, but has 30 days to prove that he or she installed an appropriate safety device.

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