

Courtesy of Safe Kids Worldwide: When it comes to preparing children for emergencies, high-profile situations like fires and medical emergencies around the home are foremost in the mind for many parents. However, for emergencies in the car, young children often do not know what to do. Parents know how important it is to teach kids about safety in the home, but think how much time kids spend in cars. A few simple precautions can make a big difference.

- **Car Seats:** Safe Kids recommends keeping kids in rear-facing car seats as long as possible, as it is the safest way for children to travel. Children more than two years old can sit in forward-facing car seats or in rear-facing convertible seats as long as the child hasn't reached the maximum car seat weight or height. Many forward-facing seats can help protect kids from 50 to 85 pounds. Booster seats protect kids up to 100 pounds. Always make sure the car seat is properly secured according to manufacturers' instructions.
- **Safety Belts:** For children who outgrow their booster seats, proper safety belt technique is critical. Show your child how to properly put on and take off a safety belt on their own. Make sure they know that the shoulder belt should always be worn in front of their chest, centered on the shoulder, and the lap belt should be low on the hips, contacting the thighs, not the stomach.
- **Airbags:** Remember that children who are up against or very close to any airbag when it inflates can be seriously injured or killed. Never put a rear-facing child restraint in the right front seat. It is also better to put a forward-facing child restraint in the rear seat as well. Check the owner's manual to see where the airbags are located in your vehicle.
- **Educate about OnStar/Sync:** If your vehicle has OnStar or Sync, you should make sure your young passengers are educated about its capabilities. In the event of a moderate-to-severe crash, OnStar will automatically connect to a trained advisor who will ask if everyone's OK and can send emergency help to the location of the vehicle. It's important that children know it is OK for them to talk to this OnStar voice and that they should answer any questions the advisor may ask and follow directions given. It's also crucial for kids to understand how to use OnStar in a non-crash-related emergency. Inform them that the red emergency button on the rearview mirror is just like dialing 9-1-1. If the driver is in trouble and cannot press the button for some reason, kids should know that this is a fast and easy way to call for help. However, you should tell them to never play with the buttons. If your vehicle has Sync, educate your child on how to use it too.
- **Car Keys:** Never leave children alone in a vehicle with the car keys. Children could operate the power windows or other vehicle controls that can be dangerous. Children can be seriously injured or killed if caught in the path of a closing window. Do not leave the keys in a vehicle with children and never leave a child alone in a vehicle. Lock all doors after leaving an empty vehicle.