

ODOT Teaches Car Seat Safety

Front to back? Back to front? Which way does the small child car seat go? Debbie Miller can answer that question...and is helping parents learn the safest way to go. In fact, the answer is: both ways. The rules are:

- Children under 40 pounds must be restrained in a child safety seat.
- Under 1 or less than 20 pounds, must be in a rear facing child safety seat.
- Over 40 pounds, but under age 8 or less than 4'9", must be in a booster for proper fit in a lap/shoulder system.

In many cases, a child safety seat can do double duty. First by restraining a child in a forward-facing car seat with a harness system until they reach 40 pounds and then the seat turn into a booster seat when the child has grown over 40 pounds. It was that kind of seat that Miller was introducing at a recent car seat clinic in Bend.

Miller was part of a car seat checkup clinic held in early Spring at a Bend City Fire Station. Many parents showed up, confused about the proper way to install a car safety seat for their children. They are not alone. ODOT estimates that 97% of all parents mistakenly believe they use car seats properly, but our surveys find that 85% of installed seats need correction.



Miller has been performing car seat checkups for about eight years, and says it's not unusual for parents to be confused about proper installation. She says, "It seems auto makers and car seat makers don't necessarily talk to each other about installation techniques".

Proper installation can save lives. ODOT's own figures show that one in three children under age eight killed or injured in crashes in 2007

in Oregon was either using an adult belt system or was totally unrestrained.

Miller spent about half an hour with each parent teaching how to use car seats safely and effectively. She says "it was time well spent, especially if I can save a life".

ODOT and its partners are sponsoring numerous such child safety seat checkups during the month of May, which is Transportation Safety Month.