

Arkansas Child Care Transportation Safety

Top “5” Vehicle Safety Concerns

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The following are vehicle safety issues most often noted during technical assistance visits with child care facilities.

Extreme Age and Mileage--It is common to find vehicles 12 to 20 years old with mileage in excess of 150,000 miles. Plainly stated these are “road weary” due to aging and wear. Without a certified mechanic’s safety inspection, these vehicles have a high probability of mechanical failures that could lead to an accident or other problem. ***Recommendation: Older vehicles need annual safety inspections to ensure there are no apparent mechanical issues with the engine/transmission, steering, suspension, brakes, electrical, exhaust, body, fuel system and tires.***

Seat Belts--Often vehicles are found to have seat belts in disrepair and/or inoperable. All seat belts should be working properly, anchored to the vehicle at the original site, not twisted or knotted, and retractable lock mechanism in good order. Child passenger safety education recommends that all children in a booster seat be restrained by a lap and shoulder belt and this also applies to any child being transported in safety belts only. Arkansas law requires a driver to secure any child under the age of 15 in a “child passenger restraint system properly secured to the vehicle”. ***Recommendations: Encourage child care facilities to purchase vehicle with lap and shoulder belts in all seating positions and ensure all belts are in good condition and function properly.***

Tires--Tires are the #1 safety item on a vehicle. Many vehicles have tires in various stages of wear and age. Tires should be uniform in size, tread and wear. If a tire needs to be replaced, replace them in pairs and put new tires on the rear. The Arkansas Child Care Transportation Safety Guide has a section on tire safety that stresses the importance of proper tire care and its relation to safety. ***Recommendation: Monitor tire condition for proper pressure, cuts/slashes, uneven tread wear, cracking, and tread depth.***

Loose Objects--Any loose object in the passenger compartment of an automobile will become flying objects in the event of a wreck or rollover. The heavier an item, the more dangerous, i.e., a spare tire, car jack, emergency triangles, booster seats, lug wrenches, fire extinguishers, filled containers, etc. All loose objects should be secured to hold them in place in the event of an accident. Most common items are booster seats --they should be strapped down when not in use. ***Recommendation: Check vehicles for loose items and advise the facility to secure them.***

Debris and Exposed Hazards--Vehicles are often found to have trash and dirt throughout reflecting a disregard for cleanliness. Cleanliness of a vehicle should be the same as cleanliness of the facility. As an environment you place children in, practice the same sanitary standard as for any other child care environment. Missing interior panels, torn seat covers damaged vents and other interior disrepair subject children to various hazards. ***Recommendations: Maintain vehicle interior in a safe and sanitary fashion the same as their facility.***