

## **OHIO'S NEW CHILD SEATBELT LAW BECOMES EFFECTIVE APRIL 6, 2009**

**By Patrolman Randy J. Veri**

In a recent six year period in Ohio, from 2002 to 2007, motor vehicle crashes killed 89 children ages 4 through 7 and injured more than 21,000 in the same age group, according to the Ohio Department of Public Safety. Brian Newbacher of the Ohio Conference of AAA Clubs said that children, 4 to 8 years old, are too small to be protected adequately by the car's seat belt system that is designed and tested for a 168-pound adult male. Booster seats help protect children from injury and death in crashes by ensuring that the adult seat belt fits properly. Proper fit reduces the risk of "lap belt syndrome," which occurs when the lap belt portion of the adult seat belt rides up into a child's abdomen, potentially causing severe injuries, from head trauma to internal injuries to vital organs. A booster seat raises the child so that the vehicle's lap and shoulder belts fit properly. The lap portion fits snug across the hips and the shoulder belt angles across the shoulder and chest. This simple and relatively inexpensive solution saves lives and reduces injuries.

Ohio lawmakers agree. On January 6, 2009, the State of Ohio signed a new child seatbelt law that will take effect on April 6, 2009. An amendment to Ohio Revised Code 4511.093, 4511.81, and 4513.263 requires certain children who are between 4-8 years of age to be secured in a booster seat. It also states that a child who is less than eight years of age and less than four feet nine inches in height has to be secured in a booster seat. Violation of this booster seat provision is a secondary traffic offense. This means that a police officer cannot stop you for not having your child in a booster seat, but if you are stopped for a traffic offense and the child seatbelt offense is noticed by the officer, you can be issued a citation.

For the first six months, from April 6 thru October 6, 2009, only warnings are to be issued to a vehicle operator if their child is found not secured in a booster seat. After October 6<sup>th</sup>, fines for the violation can range from \$25.00 to \$75.00 if issued a citation by a police officer. This is only an addendum to the Ohio seatbelt law, and it does not void any other seatbelt/child safety seat laws that are being followed at this time. If you would like to read more about the new booster seat law, and information on choosing and using a child safety seat, go to [www.boostohiokids.org](http://www.boostohiokids.org).

If you have any questions regarding the new child seatbelt law, feel free to contact me at the Wickliffe Police Community Policing and Crime Prevention Office at (440) 943-7134 or by email at [wickliffecrimeprevention@yahoo.com](mailto:wickliffecrimeprevention@yahoo.com). Thank You, Ptl.  
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