

Holiday Travel Tips – Car Seats and Airplanes

The hustle and bustle of the holiday season includes long-distance travel plans for many families. Those plans may prompt an increased concern that children are travelling as safely as possible, in both motor vehicles and airplanes.

The same child passenger safety guidelines apply whether driving around your neighborhood or flying across the country: choose the appropriate car seat for your child's age and weight; follow the vehicle and car seat instructions for proper use; and buckle up every time. For information about child passenger laws in every state, go to www.ihs.org/laws/ChildRestraint.aspx

Although airlines currently allow children under the age of two to fly free of charge as "lap children," that is not the safest way for a child to travel. Both the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommend that **all children** be buckled up when travelling in an airplane, for protection during turbulence or emergencies. www.faa.gov/passengers/fly_children/crs/

General Tips

- Purchase a ticket for your child so that s/he will be able to use a car seat or approved harness restraint called CARES™ on the plane. www.kidsflysafe.com
- Get your seat assignments in advance. Car seats may not be placed in emergency exit rows or rows in front and behind the exit rows.
- Find the label on the car seat which states, "This restraint is certified for use in motor vehicles and aircraft" to show the flight attendant if asked.
- If you check the car seat as baggage, there is a possibility that the seat could be damaged or lost when you reach your destination.
- Car seats less than 16 inches wide should fit in most airplane seats.
- Check with the specific airline for additional guidelines related to travelling with children in car seats.

Getting To and From the Airport

If you plan to drive your family vehicle and park it at the airport, you will probably ride in a shuttle bus or van from a satellite parking lot to the airport terminal. In Maryland, shuttle vehicles, taxi cabs, or other vehicles for hire are not required to have seat belts for passengers, so it is not possible to secure a car seat.

A safe alternative for families travelling with children in car seats is for the driver to drop-off the other adult and the rest of the family (and possibly the luggage and car seats) at the terminal, take the vehicle to the parking lot, and return to the terminal on the shuttle. If your family will take a shuttle service from home to the airport, request a shuttle vehicle with seat belts available to secure the car seat(s) and inform the company that you will be using the car seat(s) on the shuttle.

Remember... Take a deep breath, sit back, and enjoy the ride! Your child's safety is worth any added time, stress, or inconvenience you might experience when travelling!