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CPS Inspections and Checkup Events

Prepared by the National Child
Passenger Safety Board
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Introduction

Assisting caregivers with their car seats can be accomplished through CPS inspection stations (also known as fitting stations) car seat checkup events or through one-on-one interactions.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration maintains a Child Car Seat Inspection Station Locator, which lists inspection sites by state or zip code. To add your inspection station to the list, contact: Judy Hammond – email: Judy.Hammond@dot.gov

Setting the Stage

Whether the inspection station is held at an indoor or outdoor setting, it is important to remember that safety is the number one priority for staff and participants. To the extent possible, all CPS inspection station facilities should be accessible to individuals with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Indoor Setting

An indoor setting provides many benefits, especially protection from the weather. However, there are still precautions that must be taken when setting up an indoor CPS inspection station:

- Designate where the vehicle(s) will wait in line prior to the inspection. Be sure to have the driver turn the engine off to prevent any accidental acceleration of the car. Have a clearly defined path for the vehicle to follow at the conclusion of the inspection – ideally the vehicles will enter in one side of the facility and exit from the other side to avoid backing up.
- Check that there are no safety hazards anywhere in the vicinity.
- Make certain the location is safe for families. A designated waiting area should be made available for families with young children while the inspection takes place. Staff or a responsible volunteer should be assigned to the waiting area to insure that no child is lost or injured. If possible, clean, age-appropriate toys in good condition should be made available to occupy young children.
- Keep the area as clean as possible.
- Bathrooms should be easily accessible to the waiting area. Be sure they are clean and operational before each scheduled inspection event.
- Designate an area to keep equipment and a place where unsafe seats can be stored prior to destruction or other appropriate disposal.
- If the inspection locations is at a dealership, fire department or auto repair shop, be certain that ALL employees are notified that children will be in the area at various times.



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- Have clearly written signs set up as appropriate.

Outdoor Setting

An outdoor setting provides unique advantages (usually more space) and disadvantages (i.e. traffic and weather considerations), for the operation of a CPS inspection station. In addition to the above safety considerations, the following precautions should be taken when hosting an outdoor inspection station:

- Be sure the inspection area can be set up out of the flow of routine traffic.
- Have clear Enter and Exit areas designated by signs and traffic cones.
- If there is not an indoor waiting area available, create a clearly defined 'safe area' with rope, tape and/or traffic cones.
- Be sure to have a traffic coordinator available to direct waiting vehicles safely in and out of the inspection site.
- The inspection teams should be set up at well-spaced and clearly marked designations.
- Be sure to have sufficient equipment available to staff at each inspection area in order to minimize the amount of foot-traffic around the inspection site.

Staffing the CPS Inspection Station

The certified CPS technician has a central role in conducting child safety seat inspections. However, there are other duties and responsibilities that are very important to the successful operation of an inspection station and must be handled efficiently and professionally. In an ideal situation, people would be assigned separate roles in operating the CPS inspection station, but in most cases, one person may have several roles to play. One of the most important aspects of staffing is to assure that all individuals understand and their roles and responsibilities in the process. This is critical so as not to confuse participants with regard to traffic flow, who is greeting, who is providing education, etc.

Coordinator

The Coordinator is responsible for all the administrative needs essential to the smooth, efficient operation of a CPS inspection station. The duties of the Coordinator may include responding to calls from the public, scheduling and confirming inspection appointments, securing certified CPS technicians, ordering supplies, gathering the data collected from the inspection forms, filing the inspection forms, maintaining current education materials and a current child safety seat recall list. The Coordinator should always have access to the inspection station's written operating policies. The Coordinator may also be responsible for many of the marketing and publicity activities. The Coordinator does not have to be a certified CPS technician, but should have some formal CPS training, be knowledgeable about current CPS issues and display a sincere commitment to promoting CPS initiatives within the community.



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Greeter

Depending upon the level of activity at an inspection station, the coordinator may also serve as the “Greeter.” The Greeter helps to ensure the smooth operation of the inspection station. If there is waiting time involved, the Greeter can provide general CPS information, talk to the parent/caregiver about the inspection process, hand out the inspection form and direct vehicles to the next available CPS technicians.

Scribe/Recorder

Using the inspection station’s approved data collection form, the Scribe gathers information about the vehicle and its passengers from the vehicle driver, checks for child safety seat recalls, records information regarding seating positions, misuse, corrections made, seats installed and education information provided to the driver by the certified CPS technician. The Scribe insures that all forms are signed and dated by the driver, the certified CPS technician and the lead CPS technician, and deposits the completed form in the designated location. If a new child safety seat is installed, the Scribe also insures that the driver completes the manufacturer’s recall information card. (The coordinator may choose to mail the completed cards on behalf of the parents to insure that the cards reach the child safety seat manufacturers.)

Certified CPS Technician

It is recommended that experienced and certified CPS Technicians perform the actual seat inspections and installations. Certifications for all participating CPS Technicians must be current. The Technician’s main role is as an educator. The Technician is responsible for the inspection of the child safety seat, demonstrating to the parent or caregiver how to properly install the seat and secure the child, and deciding whether or not to replace a seat. In addition, the Technician should also insure that any replaced seats are properly disposed of so as to prevent further use (unless used in a training course).

Lead CPS Technician

The term “Lead CPS Technician” is used here to generally identify certified CPS technicians and/or instructors who serve as a “second pair of eyes” for reviewing the installation of child safety seats before the parent or caregiver leaves the inspection station. The Lead CPS Technician would also assure that the CPS checklist form is correctly completed. At CPS inspection stations that operate with multiple certified technicians, it is advisable to have at least one Lead CPS Technician available to serve in this capacity. When CPS inspections occur with only one available certified technician, this is not possible.

The NHTSA Standardized CPS Training Curriculum does not identify the roles and responsibilities of a Lead CPS Technician, as they may vary by community. Regardless, if a Lead



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CPS Technician is used, that individual's certification must be current and periodic CPS trainings should be taken to keep abreast of CPS issues and changing technologies.

Traffic Coordinator

Traffic Coordinators are typically law enforcement officials, as they usually have the expertise directing vehicles and insuring the public's safety. This position is most appropriate to inspection stations held at outside locations. However, depending upon the volume of traffic, it could be necessary to have a traffic coordinator at any CPS inspection site.

Important Reminder: Although many people play significant roles in the operation of a CPS inspection station, the most critical role is that of the parent/caregiver. The knowledge gained from the CPS inspection experience is meant to empower the parent/caregiver to properly install and use an appropriate car seat for his or her child. For this reason, the parent/caregiver should always have a "hands-on" role in the inspection process and be the last person to install the car seat using the education, guidance and assistance of the Technician or Instructor.

Outfitting the CPS Inspection Station

Equipment/Materials

The following are basic supplies used to operate a CPS inspection station. Items marked with an asterisk* are primarily used for outdoor settings.

- Current recall list
- Child safety seats for use as loaners or give-a-ways in the event that a seat must be replaced
- Manufacturers' instructions – SafetyBeltSafe offers a CD with a compilation of child restraint manufacturer's instructions
- LATCH Manual (Safe Ride News)
- CPS education materials
- List of nearby stores where new seats can be purchased if necessary
- Inspection forms
- Locking clips (regular and belt shortening)
- Clipboards
- Pens and pencils
- Foam swim 'noodles,' thin towels, slip guard (i.e. rubber shelf liner)
- Latex gloves
- First aid kits
- Anti-bacterial soap/lotion
- Waste receptacles
- Demo dolls for use when the child is not present to show correct use



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- Tape
- Storage bins
- Traffic cones*
- Barricades*
- Chalk to mark lanes*
- Tents*

A Note About Liability Concerns

The following considerations may provide some assistance in crafting a liability prevention protocol for the CPS inspection station. However, it is advisable to consult with an attorney and insurance carrier knowledgeable and experienced in liability/risk-reduction issues for specific guidance. If the CPS inspection station is part of a larger network of inspection stations, be sure that every station is following the same written procedures.

- **Provide Accurate and Current Information:** All information distributed at CPS inspection stations should come from credible sources and reflect current traffic safety issues and technologies. Contact the state occupant protection coordinator to determine what materials are recommended for distribution.
- **Teach Correct Installation and Use of Child Restraint Systems:** The most critical role at a CPS inspection is played by the parent/caregiver. Parents and caregivers that attend an inspection event want to be sure that their children are properly restrained and well protected. The objective of every CPS inspection service should be to teach parents and caregivers how to safely transport their children using the appropriate child safety seat or safety belt correctly. The inspection should include a one-on-one tutorial by a certified CPS technician that provides hands-on instruction on the proper use and installation of child restraints. **The parent/caregiver should always have a “hands-on” role in the inspection process and be the last person to install the car seat using the education, guidance and assistance of the Technician or Instructor, before the vehicle leaves the CPS inspection station.**
- **Refer to Owner’s Manuals:** Certified CPS technicians should encourage parents to consult their vehicle owner’s manual and the child safety seat instructions to help answer specific questions. Technicians should check each seat for possible recalls using the most current recall list available. An updated recall list can always be downloaded from the NHTSA website www.nhtsa.dot.gov. Technical questions can also be referred to the Department of Transportation’s Auto Safety Hotline (1-888-DASH-2-DOT, or 1-888-327-4236).



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- **Be Consistent with All Inspection Procedures:** Inspection station staff should be clear about their roles prior to each inspection event. The coordinator will insure that all roles are covered and that all necessary materials and equipment are readily accessible. When possible, a lead CPS technician should be responsible for quality control of the inspections conducted. The lead CPS technician should check each seat and review and approve each data collection form before a family leaves the inspection station. Consistent use of a standardized CPS checklist will help insure the quality of every CPS inspection. Depending on the source of your checklist, most require that the parent/caregiver sign the form to acknowledge the advice, education and information they have received. The parent/caregiver's initials may also be required following the completion of the inspection. Most standardized forms include a waiver/release of liability that has been carefully crafted by a knowledgeable attorney. Completed forms should be collected and retained by the coordinator.
- **Have a Clear Written Policy About Replacement Seats:** All staff should be aware of the written policy for replacing child safety seats and disposing of old, damaged or recalled seats. The policy should specify whether replacement seats would be provided without charge, with a requested donation or for a purchase price, and describe the process for disposing of damaged or unsafe seats. The coordinator should insure that there are a variety of child safety seats available as replacement seats. If a replacement seat is provided, the parent or caregiver should complete the product recall registration card before leaving the inspection station. The coordinator should mail all completed cards immediately so that, in the event of a recall, the child safety seat manufacturer can notify the parent or caregiver. If replacement seats are not supplied, it is advisable to provide an accurate list of community resources that offer child safety seats for families in need.
- **Make Safety a Priority:** The traffic coordinator should ensure that vehicles and people are able to move safely in and around the CPS inspection station. The safety of young children should be a top priority.

The sponsoring organization or site host may have additional considerations to insure that CPS inspections are conducted in a safe, consistent and professional manner. Be sure to communicate all requirements and procedures to every staff member (paid and volunteer) participating in CPS inspection activities.

Liability Coverage: There are several options for obtaining liability insurance to cover CPS inspection stations. Again, it is advisable to first consult the sponsoring organization to determine how liability protection will be addressed. The following are the most common types of coverage used by CPS inspection stations:



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- **State Law:** Many states have a “Good Samaritan” law that may cover the type of services provided by the CPS inspection station. In addition, several states have enacted “CPS services immunity” laws to specifically cover certified CPS Technicians. Consult the state occupant protection coordinator to determine whether such laws exist in your state.
- **General Policy:** The activities of the CPS inspection station may be covered under the general insurance policy (or through an additional rider) of the sponsoring organization. Consult with the sponsoring organization about specific terms and conditions.
- **Special Policies for National Organizations:** Some national organizations that conduct a large amount of CPS inspections have secured special liability coverage for their members. If the CPS inspection station is being sponsored by a national organization, it may have liability protection under such a policy. Consult with the sponsoring organization about specific terms and conditions.

Adapted from “A Guide to Implementing CPS Inspection Stations,” National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, DOT, HS 809 627, December 2003.

www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/childps/CPSInspectionStation/index.html