Child Restraint Replacement after a Crash

Safety experts and many child restraint manufacturers recommend that you replace your child’s restraint system following any crash, even a minor crash.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recommends that you replace your child’s restraint following a moderate or severe crash. NHTSA characterizes a minor crash as a crash that meets ALL of the following criteria:

- The vehicle was able to be driven away from the crash site
- The vehicle door nearest the child restraint was undamaged
- There were no injuries to any of the vehicle occupants
- The airbags (if present) did not deploy
- There is no visible damage to the safety seat

You may wish to visit the NHTSA web site for background information on this recommendation.

Consider contacting the child restraint manufacturer after it has been involved in a crash. The manufacturer will advise you as to their recommendation for replacing the restraint. Occasionally restraint manufacturers will offer to replace a crashed restraint. Generally replacement is at the manufacturer’s option, and is limited to seats that have been involved in more severe crashes. The replacement typically follows the return of the damaged restraint to the manufacturer. Manufacturers often like to examine seats involved in “real world” crashes as this can be helpful in the research, development and design of future restraints.

Auto insurance may cover the cost of replacing your child restraint. Check with your insurance agent to determine if the cost of replacing the restraint can be included in your claim.

A Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician (CPST) can help you select the appropriate replacement restraint for your child’s age and weight. Installation assistance is available free of charge. For questions about restraint selection or to schedule an appointment with a CPST please call the Safety Council at 225-282-3281 or 225-282-3282.