



OFFICE OF THE STATE CORONER

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CORONER REMINDS MOTORISTS ABOUT BABY CAPSULE SAFETY

NSW State Coroner, Magistrate Mary Jerram, today urged parents to make sure their most precious cargo is properly secured in their vehicle, as they return home from school holidays this weekend.

"Since July 2000, there have been 27 completed coronial investigations into the deaths of children aged two years or younger in vehicle accidents on NSW roads," Magistrate Jerram said.

"Despite the best intentions of their parents, a number of these tragic deaths could have been avoided if their young child had been properly secured in the vehicle."

The State Coroner said parents should regularly check that infants are secured in a capsule or other suitable restraint during road trips.

"Babies need to be fed and attended to frequently, which means parents are often lifting their child out of the capsule during the journey," Magistrate Jerram said.

"The only time it is safe or legal to remove a child from their restraint device is when the vehicle is properly stopped and parked. This allows parents to concentrate on their child and ensures the safety of all involved.

"In some instances, parents forget to properly restrain their infant when returning them to the capsule, which can have fatal consequences if their vehicle is in an accident.

"Babies are extremely precious and fragile and can suffer serious injuries, even in a minor collision," said Magistrate Jerram.

The State Coroner also urged parents to take regular breaks during road trips, not just to manage their fatigue, but also to enable infants to get fresh air.

"Babies have been found to experience slightly lower levels of blood oxygen if left for longer periods," Magistrate Jerram said.

"In 2009, a Canadian Coroner recommended that young infants should not be left in car seats or capsules for lengthy periods after a two-month-old suffocated after one hour."

In NSW, the Road Rules require that:

- Children younger than six months must be secured in a rearward facing restraint.
- Children aged six months to under 12 months must be secured in either a rearward or forward facing restraint.
- Children aged 12 months to under four years must be secured in a forward facing child restraint.

- Children aged four years to under seven years must be secured in forward facing child restraint or booster seat.
- Children younger than four years cannot travel in the front seat of a vehicle with two or more rows.
- Children aged four years to under seven years cannot travel in the front seat of a vehicle with two or more rows, unless all other back seats are occupied by children younger than seven years in a child restraint or booster seat.

For further information about child restraints, including laws and advice on installation, visit www.rta.nsw.gov.au.

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