


M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: October 18, 1994

TO: Beverly Sopp, Managing Editor  
EMS News

FROM: Joseph J. Colella, Jr., M.D.  
Region V Medical Director 

SUBJECT: Article on Child Safety Seat Incompatibilities

Recently, a tragedy struck our family when a motor vehicle accident took the life of my 3 year-old grand-daughter, Dana Hutchinson. She was securely fastened in a child safety seat with a lap belt that is designed to lock on impact. After her head struck the dashboard, she succumbed to fatal head and neck injuries and a cardiac arrest at the scene. We then learned that the factory-installed lap belt buckle was incompatible with a child safety seat and needed to be supplemented by a second buckle installed by the dealer (free of charge).

This fact is buried in the owner's manual and independent questioning of service managers reveals that many of them neither know about the supplemental lap belt nor have ever installed one.

The D.A.N.A. Foundation (Drivers' Appeal for National Awareness) a non-profit organization has been created to educate the public about this issue and to initiate efforts to simplify and standardize lap belt systems in US automobiles.

Tax-deductible donations to this cause may be sent to:

The D.A.N.A. Foundation  
P.O. Box 1050  
Germantown, Maryland 20785

# Protect Our Children Campaign

*In Loving Memory of Dana, June 14, 1991 - September 25, 1994*

- FACT:** Three of the seven standard seat belt systems in U.S. automobiles are incompatible with child safety seats.
- FACT:** The vast majority of parents interviewed are not aware of this problem. Some service managers for affected new car dealerships are unfamiliar with the modifications necessary to properly secure child safety seats in these vehicles due to the infrequency of requests for such modifications.
- FACT:** A three-year-old child recently died in an auto accident while using a safety seat thought to be fully secured with one of these incompatible systems. The police investigation cited "improperly secured child safety seat".
- FACT:** A simplified, standardized automobile lap belt for use with safety seats should be routinely installed whenever young children may be driven in an automobile. This should include the cars of babysitters, grandparents, close relatives, etc., as well as all rental and loaner vehicles.
- FACT:** Other western countries have laws specific to securing child safety seats.

Countless children have been or could be seriously injured or killed as a result of this urgent problem. Action must be taken NOW to publicize and correct this situation.

For more information or to assist in this campaign, call Joseph M. Colella at (301) 601-4330.

Critical Care Associates  
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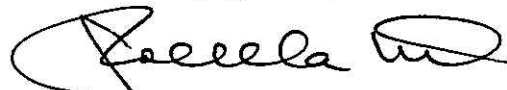
October 21, 1994

Ms. Beverly Sopp, Managing Editor  
EMS News  
MIEMSS  
636 W. Lombard Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-1528

Dear Beverly,

Attached is a bulletin from the DANA Foundation with  
supplemental information.

Sincerely yours,



Joseph J. Colella, Jr., M.D.

JJC:dla



Post Office Box 1050 • Germantown, Maryland 20875

*Established in memory of Dana Hutchinson, age 3, who died in an automobile accident while secured in a child safety seat*

## SAFETY BELT DEFICIENCIES ENDANGER YOUNG CHILDREN

Dana's child safety seat was not held in place by the lap belt system in her dad's car.

Of the seven standard types of belt systems, three are incompatible with infant and child restraints. Studies commissioned by the Federal Government a decade ago noted a concern that these restraints cannot be optimally secured with the seatbelt hardware found in some cars.

Many parents, grandparents and guardians are completely unaware that their seatbelts must be modified in order to effectively secure children. Although automobile manufacturers offer the installation of alternate systems upon request, the only reference to the specific needs of an individual make and model is often buried in the vehicle owner's manual.

The Drivers' Appeal for National Awareness (D.A.N.A.) Foundation seeks to protect countless small children from serious injuries or death. D.A.N.A.'s ultimate objective is to achieve simplified and effective seatbelt systems that are compatible with child safety restraints, in all automobiles.

Our *immediate* objective is to notify the public of the current incompatible systems, and to encourage people to make the necessary modifications **now**.

Facts supported by documented research:

- Some safety belt systems can never be safely used with child restraints (emergency-locking retractors, automatic seatbelts, seatbelts mounted forward of seat crease or on door).
- Other systems require additional hardware and/or special child restraint installation techniques before they can be used.
- Manually tightened lap belts are the only seatbelts that are ideal in design for child restraints.
- Airbags endanger infants in rear-facing restraints, yet will be required for right front passenger seats in 1997.
- Current regulations are based on a 30 m.p.h. impact with substantial movement of a child being "acceptable".

If your organization can help D.A.N.A. accomplish the above objectives through donations, exposure or via media coverage, please contact us by mail or fax (301) 601-9228. We will respond promptly to all inquiries. Thank you for your support!

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