

# Safer on the roads



With its new Car Seat Safety campaign, launched during GCC Traffic Week, RasGas is urging parents to put children and safety first in 2008

In a car crash at just 30mph, a child who isn't wearing a seat belt will be hurled inside the car (or ejected through the car window) with a force 30–60 times their body weight. For a small child it's the equivalent of falling from a fourth-floor window. The impact of an unrestrained child could also kill or seriously injure the driver or front seat passenger.

The stark facts make uneasy reading. But over 10,000 road accidents were reported in Qatar last year and 199 people were killed as a result, of which nearly a quarter were children.

The safest way for children to travel in a car is in a properly fitted child seat appropriate to their weight and size. It's estimated that putting a child in a car seat cuts the risk of injury or death by at least 50 per cent. It is not safe for an adult to hold a child or baby on their lap, even if they are using a seat belt around both of them. The impact of a car crash would force the child from their arms, no matter how hard the adult tried to hold on. For the same reason it is also dangerous to fasten one seat belt around two children in a vehicle.

The State of Qatar has developed a two-pronged approach to improving children's road safety. On the one hand, a big education drive by the Traffic and Patrols Department is helping to make drivers and families more aware of child safety issues, while on the other road safety laws are being strictly enforced to reduce reckless driving and the growing number of accidents. The number of traffic violations in the four months before the introduction of the new traffic laws on 2 October 2007 was 244,722, compared to 178,371 violations since that date. Statistics show that the number of road accidents has gone down by about 13 per cent in the same period.

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Qatar is one of the first of the Gulf countries to enforce the new rules. Article 55 of the new law contains special road safety requirements for children, including the provision of car seats, and there are financial penalties for anyone who fails to comply. Similar laws have proved to be effective in countries around the world. In the UK, wearing a seatbelt in the front seat of a car was made compulsory in 1983 and in the back seat in 1991. RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) calculates that more than 50,000 lives have been saved as a result. New, stricter regulations relating to children's car seats were introduced in September 2006. Before that almost 8,000 children were killed or injured in car accidents every year in the UK. The new regulations are expected to cut this figure by 2,000 – more than a quarter. Today, many UK hospitals do not let parents drive their new baby home from hospital unless they see the infant is safely strapped into a suitable car seat.

However, even in countries where seatbelt legislation has successfully reduced the number of children injured or killed in road accidents, many car seats are still not fitted or used appropriately. In Qatar RasGas is a strong supporter of the National Campaign for the Prevention of Road Accidents and is committed to raising public awareness about the importance of using child seats correctly. For this reason, it launched a high-profile Car Seat Safety campaign to coincide with the start of GCC Traffic Week in March.

RasGas has always promoted a strong safety culture in its business activities, taking pride in an outstanding record in safeguarding its employees from accident or injury in the workplace. Now, with this new campaign, it is turning its attention to help develop a safety culture in wider Qatari society. Safety is an important element of RasGas' Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme, which is dedicated to improving the welfare and wellbeing of all Qatar's people. The new Car Seat Safety campaign is leading the way in this area, actively helping to save children's lives by promoting the safe use of child car seats.

As part of the campaign, RasGas will donate a total of 300 car seats to parents of new-born babies over the course of the next 12 months. It will provide a new baby seat for the first 25 babies born each month at Hamad Hospital in Doha. RasGas has also produced an information leaflet to raise public awareness of the issue. The leaflet contains clear instructions in English and Arabic and pictures showing parents and carers how to choose and install the most appropriate car seat for their child.

Throughout 2008 RasGas will continue to help raise public awareness of road safety issues in Qatar. However, it's still important that parents and other adult drivers set the right example for children. By wearing their own seat belts on every trip, they send the right message to children and ensure that the next generation of Qataris get into good road safety habits from an early age.

**THROUGHOUT 2008 RASGAS WILL CONTINUE TO RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF ROAD SAFETY ISSUES IN QATAR**

**CHILDREN'S CAR SAFETY**

**Before starting a journey, parents or carers should:**

- Check that the baby seat, child seat or booster cushion fits the make and model of their car
- Check that whatever seat is installed is appropriate to the child's height, weight and age
- Check that the seat is properly fitted into the vehicle before use and that manufacturer's instructions have been followed

**Remember:**

- A rear-facing child seat should never be used in the front of a car fitted with an airbag
- Child restraints need to be properly fitted on every journey
- Children up to the age of 11 still need a child seat



Wearing a seat belt or placing your child in a properly fitted car seat can significantly reduce your child's risk of injury or death

