



The Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 was launched on the 11 May 2011. It is a global declaration of war against road crashes and fatalities.

According to Mr Sibusiso Ndebele, MP Minister of Transport the death of approximately 1.3 million people every year on the world's roads is fit to be described as an epidemic. By all accounts the death of some 14 000 people every year, the death of at least 1 000 people every month, the death of no less than 40 people every day on South Africa's roads must be described as an epidemic. These road deaths cost South Africa at least R60 billion per annum. Alone we might not be strong enough, but we now stand together with the world to declare that road deaths can be stopped. It is all in our hands.

Mr Ndebele said that he would like to remind the world that while it is the living who close the eyes of the dead, it is the dead who must open the eyes of the living.

Through the Decade of Action, Member States, with the support of the international community, commit to actions in areas such as developing and enforcing legislation on key risk factors such as:

- limiting speed;
- reducing drunk-driving; and

increasing the use of seatbelts, child restraints and motorcycle helmets.

Children are particularly vulnerable to injury and death on South African roads as they are often not properly secured in the car. No legislation currently exists for car seat usage in South Africa. Road traffic injuries are amongst the leading cause of children's death and disability; including traumatic brain injury, head trauma, spinal cord injury, paralysis and other permanent conditions.

Proper legislation for the use of car and booster seats for young children will go a long way in saving lives. Tum2mom would like to support the Decade of Action for Road safety by

launching a *Strap-in-the-Future* campaign. The campaign aims to educate parents about using proper age appropriate child restraints and seatbelts. If parents follow these guidelines, they will be able to reduce the risk of losing a child in the event of an accident.

The American National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recommends that all children under the age of 13 should avoid riding in the front seat. The middle of the back seat is the safest place in the car. Children under the age of 8, or less than 4'9" tall, should always use booster seats, which can reduce the risk of death in a car crash by over 50%.

Without a booster seat, the fit of a conventional seatbelt can lead to a child's serious injury or death in a collision of any magnitude. A conventional shoulder seat belt fits across the neck of a small child. A conventional lap belt fits above the pelvis of a small child, and can cause fatal internal abdominal injury in an accident.

The NHTSA also recommends that you keep children under the age of 3 in rear-facing child restraint car seats. Rear-facing car seats spread the force of a frontal car crash over the whole area of the child's back, neck, and head, while preventing the head-snapping motion that can cause devastating injuries to young children. A child has outgrown a rear-facing seat if his or her head comes within one inch of the top of the car seat.

To keep your child safe, use rear-facing and booster seats where appropriate, and always be sure to buckle your children up. It is more than merely a good safety tip; it might just save a life – your child's.

Guidelines for Parents

A child under the age of 1 should always ride in a rear-facing car seat. It has a harness and in a crash, cradles and moves with your child to reduce the stress to the child's neck and spinal cord. Keep your child rear-facing until he or she reaches the top height and weight limit allowed by the car seat manufacturer.

Once your child outgrows this seat, your child can travel in a forward facing car seat until approximately the age of three years. Finally, your child should graduate into a booster seat. A booster seat positions the seat belt so that it fits properly over the shoulder and torso of your child's body. A booster seat should always be placed in the back seat and should be used for all children under the age of eight.

Parents should insist that their child sits safely buckled in on the back seat until the age of 12. Parents should lead by example and always use a safety belt too.

Tum2Mom supports the <http://www.safelaaities.co.za/> website and will be hosting an event in conjunction with Mommies Magazine in Johannesburg. And Mommies Magazine will be hosting an event in Cape Town. More details to follow.

If you would like to support this initiative please contact janine@tum2mom.co.za .