

[IMAGE]

Extended Cabs, Extensive Risks

Safety guidelines urge parents to always place children in the back seat of a vehicle. But these recommendations might not be so safe when it comes to some models of pickup trucks. Many trucks provide an extended cab that allows additional passengers to ride inside the vehicle behind the front seats, usually on fold-down "jump" seats. Families may prefer these models because of increased space, yet riding in the rear seats of these trucks may be dangerous for your kids.

Crash injury data were collected from 1998 to 2000 from State Farm Insurance claims involving over 7,000 vehicles and 11,000 children (age 15 or younger). Only 1990 and newer vehicles were included in the study; passenger cars, sport utility vehicles, vans, and pickup trucks (both extended-cab and regular cab) were considered. The results of this study from the *Journal of the American Medical Association* are disturbing:

- Children riding in compact, extended-cab pickup trucks were approximately three times more likely to be injured in a crash than children in all other vehicles.
- Children occupying the rear seats of these particular trucks were almost five times as likely to be injured as children in other vehicles.
- Even riding in the front seats of these trucks nearly doubled risk for injury in children, compared to riding in the front seats of other vehicles.

Children riding in compact extended-cab trucks may not be as safe as children riding in other vehicles. Researchers concluded that during crashes, collisions of children with the more confined and less padded area, coupled with lap-only seatbelts, might be the reason for more injuries. Parents with a choice of vehicles should not transport children in compact extended-cab trucks; children who must ride in these trucks may be safer in the front seat.

Reference:

Winston FK, Kallan MJ, Elliott MR, et al. Risk of injury to child passengers in compact extended-cab pickup trucks. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2002;287(9), pp. 1147-1152.

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