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Press Release

International conference

23 February 2024

TÜV SÜD brings together experts for in-car child safety

Munich. The safety of children in cars is an issue that involves more than just technology. Ease of use of child restraint systems is key to the in-car safety of little ones. With this in mind, Philippe Lesire, who chaired the 21st Conference on Protection of Children in Cars held at TÜV SÜD also talked about the “dream of a child safety seat that no longer requires user instructions”. New topics included longer life for restraint systems in order to improve sustainability, and the importance of spare parts availability.

From reboard seats to Isofix and iSize, the focus of the talks, workshops and discussions at the conference has developed continuously over the years. For a long time, experts focused on the improvement of child-safety seats, the use of reboard seats (as rear-facing child-safety seats are known) and the transport of children in private cars in general. All these aspects have now advanced to a very high standard of safety. Today’s focus topics revolve around child safety in buses and in car sharing as well as other new forms of mobility.

A look at the current situation shows that according to a study conducted by several universities, in the USA only 61 per cent of infants aged between one and four are restrained correctly when travelling in taxis or ride-sharing vehicles. In the European Union, the Spanish organisation IDIADA is currently addressing restraint systems in buses. As Marta Anglés Torradeflot reported, an UNECE regulation on this topic is currently under development. In accordance with this regulation, all new buses will have to be equipped to fit standard child safety seats with effect from 2027 onwards. Different vehicles, different seats. What if the angles of the vehicle’s backrest and the child seats do not match, leaving a gap between them? Julie Mansfield from Ohio University provided reassurance. Extensive crash tests performed by her team have shown that this gap does not affect safety.

Safe and sustainable

Many parents hand down used child restraint systems to younger siblings or other families. The workshop participants proposed supporting this form of sustainability by improving the

availability of replacement parts such as car seat covers or worn harnesses. The experts agreed that in general, manufacturers should also prioritise recyclable materials to a greater extent.

New test methods, old problems

The experts present at the conference held by TÜV SÜD Academy also turned their scrutiny on test methods and procedures. How accurately do dummies reproduce the behaviour of the human body? Or are the results delivered by today's computer simulations more reliable than physical tests? Must a child's age, weight and height be taken as criteria in the choice of a restraint system? What must be considered when transporting very overweight children? The experts discussed all of the above questions. On the topic of obese children, Francisco J. Lopez-Valdes from Spanish university Ponteficia Comillas simply advised the use of a test dummy for an older age group.

The 113 participants in the three-day conference came from 23 countries. While the majority of talks have been given by experts from northern and central Europe in the past, the conference now also welcomes many participants from North America and western Europe. Suzanne Tylko from Transport Canada praised this vibrant international and even intercontinental collaboration, and encouraged the experts to continue sharing the results of their work.

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