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Holden Police Department Receives Child Passenger Safety Equipment Grant

The Holden Police Department has received a \$5,000 grant from the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) to expand its child passenger safety efforts. The EOPSS awarded 67 of these grants totaling \$660,773 to Massachusetts communities and organizations with a public purpose to reduce motor vehicle fatalities and injuries involving children.

Nationwide traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for children ages 3 to 14. The grants will be used primarily to purchase child safety seats for distribution to parents and caregivers in need.

"With this grant, the Holden Police Department can better serve parents and caregivers who want to protect their children from death or injury by properly securing them in a safety belt, booster seat, or child safety seat," said H.P.D. Officer Gregg Sculthorpe. "We can also keep reminding adults that they must set a good example for kids by obeying the Massachusetts safety belt law and always buckling up themselves."

In April 2008, Governor Deval Patrick signed Senate Bill 2018, dubbed the Booster Seat Bill, into law. This law went into effect on July 10, 2008. This enhancement of the Massachusetts Child Passenger Safety Law requires that all children riding in passenger motor vehicles must be in a federally approved child passenger restraint that is properly fastened and secured until they are 8 years old or over 57" tall. Once a child has outgrown their child seat they need to use a booster seat until they are 8 years old or over 57" tall. Children 12 and under are safest when properly restrained in the back seat, ideally away from airbags.

The Massachusetts Child Passenger Safety Law is a primary enforcement law. With minor exceptions, a police officer may stop a motor vehicle if a child is riding improperly restrained. A driver will be fined up to \$25.00 for each improperly restrained child.

The Holden Police Department wants to remind the public that the Massachusetts Safety Belt Law requires everyone to buckle up. Adults need to set a good example for children, because 70% of youngsters whose parents don't use safety belts will not buckle up when they grow up. A 2007 EOPSS survey found only a 69% safety belt use rate among front seat occupants of all ages in Massachusetts – far lower than the national use rate of 82%. This low use rate is a serious public safety and health issue given that safety belts reduce

one's risk of death or serious injury in a crash by up to 50%.

If you need more information on how to obtain or properly install child passenger restraints call the Massachusetts Child Passenger Safety Hotline at 1-877-392-5956, TTY 1-617-725-0261, or go to www.mass.gov/childsafetyseats.

Holden residents who would like a safety seat installed or checked can call the Holden Police Department at 508-829-4444 to find out when a certified technician will be available. This service, as well as a limited number of car seats purchased with the grant, will also be available at the station during this year's Public Safety Day, scheduled for Sunday, October 5, 2008 from noon until 4:00 PM.