

LATCH: LOWER ANCHORS AND TETHERS FOR CHILDREN

WHAT IS THE LATCH SYSTEM?

LATCH stands for **L**ower **A**nchorage and **T**ethers for **C**hildren. LATCH systems, previously referred to as the Universal Child Safety Seat System (UCSSS), will greatly simplify child safety seat installation and will help to protect children by keeping seats more secure in vehicles. Under the requirements of Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 225, all passenger motor vehicles will have at least some seating positions equipped with standard anchors and all child restraints will have fittings that will clip onto the vehicle fittings quickly and easily. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that once all vehicles and child safety seats have the new system by September 1, 2002, America will save about 50 lives and prevent 3,000 injuries every year.

LATCH IN THE VEHICLE

In the vehicle, the complete LATCH system consists of two lower anchorages and one upper anchorage. Each lower anchorage will be a rigid, round rod or bar located where the vehicle seat cushion meets the seat back. The upper tether anchorage will be a ring-like object, permanently attached to the vehicle at the top of the rear seat. At least two rear seating positions in each vehicle will be equipped with the complete LATCH system. In addition, a third rear seating position will have an upper tether anchorage to hold the child seat tightly so the child's head won't move too far forward in the event of a crash.

LATCH ON THE CAR SEATS

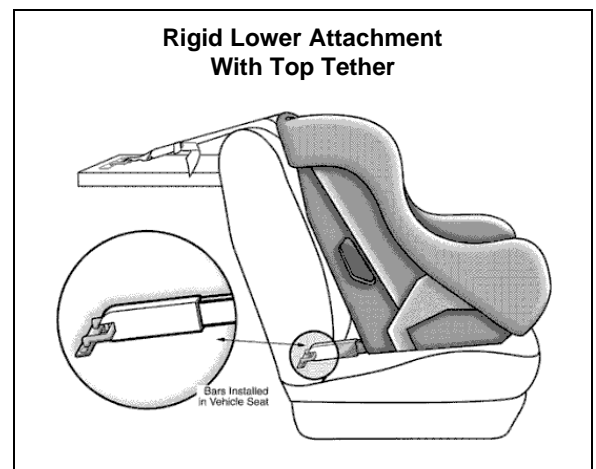
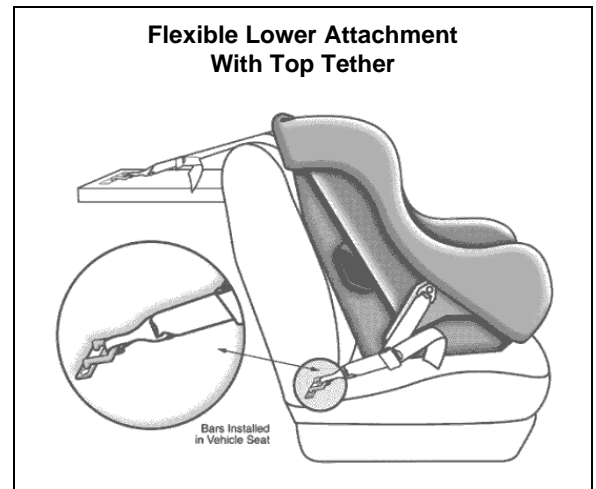
LATCH equipped child restraint systems (CRS) will have a connector that hooks or snaps onto the lower anchorage bars in the vehicle. The CRS's can use either a flexible or rigid lower anchor. The flexible anchor uses a hook that is attached to a length of belt webbing that is tightened like a seat belt after being hooked to the vehicle anchor. The rigid anchor is a metal bar or rod that clamps on to the vehicle anchor. A tether strap from the top of the CRS will be attached to the upper tether anchorage with both systems.

NEW CAR, OLDER SEAT?

The phase-in of the LATCH systems does not mean that the use of older seats or older vehicles is unsafe. Child restraint systems on the market today are very safe and provide very good protection to children when installed and used properly. Unfortunately, too many are incorrectly installed in vehicles and LATCH systems will help resolve this problem. Parents and other care givers should continue to use their current child restraint systems properly, making sure to read the child seat and vehicle owner's manual about proper child seat use and installation. New vehicles will still be equipped with seat belts that will be able to secure older child restraint systems.

In addition, new LATCH equipped child restraint systems can be used in older vehicles without LATCH anchorages. Federal standards require that the seats meet the crash test performance standards using the "old" method if installation with the vehicle seat belts as well as the LATCH anchorages. Most older vehicles can be fitted with top tether strap anchorages to provide an extra margin of safety. Refer to the vehicle owners' manual for information on tether anchorages for a specific vehicle.

To find out which vehicles are equipped with the LATCH systems, contact your local car dealer or the auto manufacturer customer service contacts listed below. To find out which child restraint systems are equipped with the LATCH systems, contact the manufacturer customer service contacts or web sites listed below.



Graphics: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

LATCH SYSTEM PHASE-IN SCHEDULE

By September 1, 2002, all new vehicles and child safety seats will be equipped with the new system.

! Phase in schedule for Vehicles

- " *Tether anchorages*
 - 80% of new cars manufactured on or after September 1, 1999
 - 100% of new cars and light trucks manufactured on or after September 1, 2000
- " *Lower anchor points*
 - 20% of all vehicles manufactured after September 1, 2000
 - 50% of all vehicles manufactured after September 1, 2001
 - 100% of all vehicles manufactured after September 1, 2002

! Phase in schedule for Child Restraint Systems

- " *Tether straps*
 - 100% of seats manufactured on or after September 1, 1999 must meet new, more stringent head protection requirements. Most models will use tethers to comply.
- " *Lower anchors*
 - 100% of seats manufactured on or after September 1, 2002.

CUSTOMER SERVICE CONTACT NUMBERS FOR AUTOMOBILE MANUFACTURERS					
Acura	(800) 382-2238	Hyundai	(800) 633-5151	Pontiac	(800) 762-2737
Audi	(800) 822-2834	Infiniti	(800) 662-6200	Porsche	(800) 545-8039
BMW	(800) 831-1117	Isuzu	(800) 255-6727	Rolls-Royce	(877) 300-8803
Buick	(800) 521-7300	Land Rover	(800) 637-6837	Saab	(800) 955-9007
Cadillac	(800) 458-8006	Lexus	(800) 255-3987	Saturn	(800) 553-6000
Chevrolet	(800) 222-1020	Mazda	(800) 222-5500	Subaru	(800) 782-2783
DaimlerChrysler	(800) 992-1997	Mercedes Benz	(800) 367-6372	Suzuki	(800) 934-0934
Ford	(800) 323-8400	Mitsubishi	(888) 648-7820	Toyota	(800) 331-4331
GMC Truck	(800) 462-8782	Nissan	(800) 647-7261	Volkswagen	(800) 822-8987
Honda	(800) 999-1009	Oldsmobile	(800) 442-6537	Volvo	(800) 458-1552

CUSTOMER SERVICE CONTACT NUMBERS FOR CHILD RESTRAINT MANUFACTURERS		
Britax	(888) 427-4829	www.childseat.com
Century Products	(800) 837-4044	www.centuryproducts.com
Cosco	(800) 544-1108	www.coscoinc.com
Evenflo	(800) 233-5921	www.evenflo.com
E-Z-On Products, Inc.	(800) 323-6598	www.ezonpro.com
Fisher-Price	(800) 432-5437	www.fisher-price.com
Graco Baby Products	(800) 345-4109	www.gracobaby.com
Kolcraft	(800) 453-7673	no website
Safeline Corporation	(800) 829-1625	www.safelinecorp.com