

Remarks prepared for delivery by

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*Moving Kids Safely '97:*

*Strengthening Safe Communities*

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Next week marks the beginning of the holiday travel season. This period, between Thanksgiving and New Year's, is always one of the busiest times for the airlines. And with families enjoying the benefits of a thriving economy, air travel is going to be even busier than usual.

Planes will be crowded. And many of these passengers will be parents traveling with infants and young children.

There is no question that aviation is the safest way for families to travel. The goal of the Federal

Aviation Administration is to make it even safer for children by encouraging parents to use child safety seats that are government approved.

We know that injuries to small children on board planes often can be prevented by sensible safeguards.

At the time of our last conference, the FAA had just issued a final rule to ban the use of booster seats aboard all U.S. carriers. These restraints provide protection in automobiles, but are not suitable for air travel. We also prohibited harness and vest-type restraints.

Our tests had shown that these devices failed to offer adequate protection for infants and toddlers in aircraft.

Another rule, issued concurrently by the Highway Traffic Safety Administration, required the

clear labeling of approved and unapproved child restraints.

In addition to taking regulatory action, we offered parents advice based on findings from the FAA's extensive research. We recommended the safest type of restraint, depending on the weight of the child.

To encourage the wider use of approved child safety seats, several airlines are now offering steep fare discounts to parents with children under two years of age.

The measure is an inducement for parents to pay a little extra for a great deal more safety.

When planes are packed — as they so often are these days — parents can't always expect to find empty seats for their very small children. Often, they

end up holding their infants in their laps. Discounted tickets give parents an affordable alternative for a safer, more comfortable flight.

The FAA commends the airlines for this voluntary initiative in the interest of child safety.

Since our last conference, the FAA launched an important effort to make air travel even safer for children and adults alike. We introduced an education campaign to raise public awareness of the dangers of turbulence.

In-flight turbulence is the leading cause of injuries to airline passengers and flight attendants. Each year, nearly 60 passengers are injured as a result of turbulence. Because these injuries are preventable, the FAA has made a commitment to educate the public about the risks involved when

passengers — young and old — fly without their seat belts fastened.

Our aim was to promote the idea that seat belts should be worn throughout the entire flight. We want air travelers to be as vigilant about buckling up in the plane as they are in their cars.

Difficult as it may be to keep active youngsters strapped in their seats, the possibility of injury from turbulence should be clearly understood by all parents.

In our ongoing effort to make the public more aware of safe travel practices, the FAA has formed partnerships with an array of organizations in the fields of aviation, travel, child safety, health, and consumer issues.

Many of you are here today, and we look forward to exchanging ideas and finding ways to extend our collaboration. We need to band together because it takes special dedication to protect the interests of children.

On behalf of the FAA, I want to affirm our agency's continued concern for child safety and our unflagging commitment to the search for better safeguards.

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