

# Counterfeit Car Seats

Unsafe “counterfeit” or “knock-off” car seats have recently been available for sale online. The most obvious tell-tale sign that a car seat may be counterfeit is the missing label that states the car seat conforms to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 213 (FMVSS 213). The car seats may be missing the registration card, car seat instruction manual, harness retainer clip (chest clip), and labels. Counterfeit car seats use materials that look similar to those used on car seats that meet the federal standards. When the counterfeit car seats were tested, dangerous chemicals were found in the textiles and during crash testing, the dummy fell out of the car seats.

## Car seats that meet FMVSS 213 will have:

- ◆ A car seat instruction manual and registration card.
- ◆ The required safety labels:
  - ◆ Name and address of the Manufacturer
  - ◆ Verification that it conforms to federal standards
  - ◆ Date of manufacture and model number
  - ◆ Basic instructions for correct use and installation
- ◆ A harness retainer clip (chest clip) which is found on all car seats in the US.
- ◆ Harness components that are generally made of metal.



**Labels:** According to NHTSA, parents should always check for labeling that states, “This child restraint system conforms to all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards”. If a label with this statement is not present on the car seat, it is likely a counterfeit or noncompliant car seat. Non-compliant car seats often feature poorly worded safety labels that seem to have been translated to English from another language.

**Register your car seat:** Register your car seat with the manufacturer to be certain of its authenticity. Some counterfeit car seat will print copies of the stickers that belong to a car seat manufacturer, but they will use a model number already in use or create a fake model number. Registering your car seat allows the manufacturer to contact you if there is ever a recall or issue with your car seat.



## When examined, counterfeit car seats were found to have:

- ◆ All seat parts made of plastic; including the buckles.
- ◆ A poorly fitting harness for the child and missing the chest clip.
- ◆ A loose piece of plastic used for the harness adjuster on the underside of the carrier.
- ◆ A flimsy part provided to attach the carrier to the base. With very little pressure that part almost snapped.
- ◆ No car seat instructions, registration card, or safety labeling, including the date of manufacture.
- ◆ Plastic so flimsy that it could be bent by hand.



Call 1-800-CAR-BELT to find out how to have your car seat evaluated by a child passenger safety technician.

# Car Seat Expiration and Replacement Information

## Car Seat Manufacturer's Expiration Date: Each car seat manufacturer determines the life span for their car seats.

Most manufacturers suggest replacing a car seat at 6 years from the date of manufacture, although some car seats have a life span up to 10 years. Always read and follow the car seat manufacturer's instructions to determine the recommended life span of a car seat.

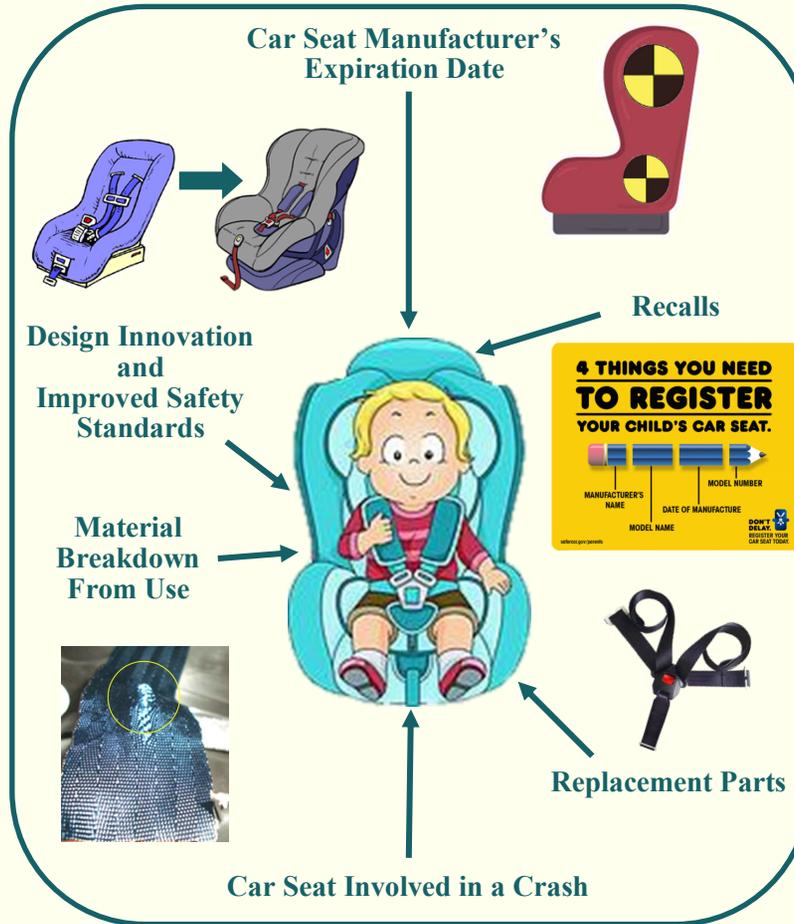
Expiration dates are a way for car seat manufacturers to provide guidance on the expected "useful" life of their car seat. The car seat expiration date is based on the date of manufacture, not the date of purchase or use. Discontinue use of the car seat once the expiration date is reached. The date of manufacture can be found on the label that provides the model number. The sticker may be found on the back, side, or bottom of the car seat. **Some child restraint manufacturers are placing expiration dates molded into the plastic shell of the car seat.** The expiration date may be provided as a month and year or in number of years from the date of manufacture.



## Design Innovation and Improved Safety Standards:

A car seat that is passed down from friends and family may appear to be in great condition, but older car seats may not have newer lifesaving technologies and recently updated safety standards. For example, before 2002, car seats were not equipped with Lower Anchor and Tethers for Children (LATCH). Now they are a standard feature on car seats. Expiration dates ensure older car seats are removed from use and children are protected by car seats designed with current safety features and meet the most current standards.

**Material Breakdown From Use:** Car seats are often exposed to extreme temperatures in hot and cold cars. Over time, the car seat shell can develop hairline fractures from exposure to the heat and cold, and the harness webbing can become frayed from use. The car seat breakdown may not be visible, but the strength of the car seat can become compromised over time.



**Recalls:** An older car seat may have been part of a recall, and you may not have been notified.

## Register Your Car Seat for Recall and Safety Notices

Register car seats to ensure you will be notified about recalls and guided through the repair process. Car seats can be registered:

- ◆ Online at the car seat manufacturer's website, using the model number and manufacture date that is found on a sticker located on the back or bottom of the car seat.
- OR
- ◆ By filling out the registration card that came with the car seat. The registration card has the car seat's information. Mail the card; no postage is required.
- OR
- ◆ Online at [www.safercar.gov/parents](http://www.safercar.gov/parents). Select "Car Seat & Booster Seats" and then "Registration". Complete and submit the online form.

**Replacement Parts:** As designs change, manufacturers may not maintain an inventory of older car seat parts. These parts may not be available beyond the expiration date.

**Car Seat Involved in a Crash:** Always follow the car seat manufacturer's guidance about replacing a car seat if you are involved in a crash. The forces in a collision can sometimes cause unseen damage. This hidden damage may keep the car seat from properly protecting the child in future crashes. Some car seat manufacturers recommend that a car seat be replaced after a crash of any severity, even a minor crash. Some car seat manufacturers follow the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recommendations.

NHTSA recommends that child safety seats be replaced following a moderate or severe crash in order to ensure a continued high level of crash protection for child passengers. NHTSA does not recommend that a car seat be replaced following a minor crash.

**Minor crashes are those that meet ALL of the following criteria:**

- ◆ The vehicle was able to be driven away from the crash site.
- ◆ The vehicle door nearest the safety seat was undamaged.
- ◆ There were no injuries to any of the vehicle occupants.
- ◆ The air bags (if present) did not deploy.
- ◆ There is no visible damage to the safety seat.

