



NEWS RELEASE

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**THE AD COUNCIL AND THE NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY
ADMINISTRATION LAUNCH CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE BOOSTER SEAT USE**

Crash Test Dummies Return to Advertising After a 5-year Hiatus

NEW YORK, February 11, 2004 – The Advertising Council and the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) today announced the launch of a new public service advertising (PSA) campaign designed to educate parents of young children who have outgrown their toddler seat that a booster seat is a lifesaving transition to an adult seat belt. Created *pro bono* by ad agency Leo Burnett USA in Chicago, the PSAs are a part of the Ad Council's highly successful Safety Belt Education campaign and are launching today to coincide with Child Passenger Safety Week (February 8-14).

According to NHTSA, 80-90% of the children in America who should be restrained in a booster seat are not. Children who have outgrown their toddler seat, at around age 4 and 40 pounds, are far safer sitting in a booster seat until they are at least 8 years old or 4'9" tall rather than wearing a seat belt. Seat belts are designed for adults, not for children, and a child shorter than 4'9" tall can sustain serious injuries in a crash when using the seat belt alone.

"Safety belts are not designed to fit smaller children," said NHTSA Administrator Jeffrey W. Runge, M.D. "Booster seats remedy that problem by positioning the belt where it is most effective."

In fact, young children prematurely moved to safety belts are 4 times more likely to suffer serious head injuries than children in child safety seats or booster seats. However, without consistent laws and enforcement, the importance of using a booster seat is still largely unknown among parents and caregivers. While most parents have heard of booster seats, surveys have found that they don't know how booster seats work, how their children can benefit or who should use them.

In a response to this major information gap, NHTSA and the Ad Council have partnered to launch the new campaign to communicate the importance of using booster seats. Leo Burnett, the ad agency that introduced the Crash Test Dummies nearly two decades ago, once again donated their time and talent to create the PSAs for the campaign which features new child-sized Crash Test Dummies. The ads target parents of kids aged 4-8 who are vigilant in regards to their children's safety, but are unaware of the need to use a booster seat.

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The PSAs direct audiences to visit a newly created website - www.boosterseat.gov -- for additional information about the importance of wearing booster seats. Television PSAs are being distributed this month, followed by new print and Internet ads this spring. There will also be Spanish-language PSAs available.

“The number of Americans who have young children and are unaware of the necessity of a booster seat is staggering. Even our country’s most conscientious parents currently lack the information that they need to keep their children safe,” said Peggy Conlon, President and CEO of the Ad Council. “I am confident that our new Crash Test Dummies will resonate with Americans the way that Vince and Larry did nearly twenty years ago and encourage parents to use booster seats for their children until they’re big enough for an adult safety belt.”

Since Vince & Larry, the Crash Test Dummies, were introduced to the American public in 1985, safety belt usage has increased from 14% to 79%, the highest percentage in our country’s history. NHTSA estimates that seat belts have saved nearly 165,000 lives since 1975.

The new television PSAs feature parents participating in everyday activities with child-sized Crash Test Dummies, instead of their children. Parents are seen playing with a dummy in the park, reading a storybook to a dummy, pushing one on a swing-set and swimming in a pool. A voiceover tells the viewers, “You wouldn’t treat a Crash Test Dummy like a child, so why treat a child like a Crash Test Dummy?”

“When we found out that at least 4 out of 5 children who should be in booster seats aren’t, we immediately realized that those kids are just statistics waiting to happen. They’re basically crash test dummies. That’s the thought we knew would reach every parent,” said Kash Sree, senior vice president/creative director at Leo Burnett USA. “The challenge was capturing that thought on film in a way that gave life to the crash test dummies.”

The Ad Council is distributing the PSAs to more than 28,000 media outlets throughout the country. Per the Ad Council’s model, they will run and air in advertising time and space that is donated by the media. In addition, NHTSA is distributing educational kits to coincide with the campaign to 10,000 teachers nationwide this week, and working with its broad network of non-profit, public safety and state government agencies to heighten awareness about the benefits of booster seat use.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Transportation, is responsible for reducing deaths, injuries and economic losses resulting from motor vehicle crashes. NHTSA investigates safety defects in motor vehicles, sets and enforces fuel economy standards, helps states and local communities reduce the threat of drunk drivers, promotes the use of safety belts, child safety seats and air bags, investigates odometer fraud, establishes and enforces vehicle anti-theft regulations and provides consumer information on motor vehicle safety topics.

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Leo Burnett

Using its proprietary Brand Belief System(SM), Leo Burnett USA creates ideas that inspire enduring belief for many of the world's most valuable brands and most successful marketers, including Altoids, McDonald's, Disney, Procter & Gamble, Marlboro, Heinz, Kellogg, Nintendo and the U.S. Army.

With worldwide billings of \$9.5 billion in 2001, Leo Burnett is a wholly owned subsidiary of Paris-based Publicis Groupe SA (www.publicis.com), the world's fourth largest communications group, according to Advertising Age's ranking of April 2003 as well as the world leader in media counsel and buying, according to RECMA's ranking of January 2003.

The Advertising Council

The Ad Council is a private, non-profit organization with a rich history of marshalling volunteer talent from the advertising and media industries to deliver critical messages to the American public. Having produced literally thousands of PSA campaigns addressing the most pressing social issues of the day, the Ad Council has effected, and continues to effect, tremendous positive change by raising awareness, inspiring action, and saving lives. To learn more about the Ad Council and its campaigns, visit www.adcouncil.org.

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