

21 November 2005

Embargoed until 00.01am Wednesday 30 November 2005

### **PARENTS RISK KIDS SAFETY**

MILLIONS of parents could be putting their child's safety at risk while behind the wheel, new research reveals today.

Shocking statistics from leading insurer Norwich Union reveal that a child's car seat is the last thing drivers' check after an accident, with people twice as likely (92%) to check their lights after a collision as their child car seat (46%).

Norwich Union is urging motorists to be more aware of the need to protect young passengers after a collision. The insurer is teaming up with retailer Halfords, the UK's number one fitting specialists, to offer its policyholders replacement child seat cover of up to £100 in the event of a collision, or for incidents of fire or theft.

Almost half of all parents who drive (44%) admit that they wouldn't change their child car seat after an accident, despite the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) recommending that all child car seats are replaced after a collision – because it's possible that the child seat has been weakened to such an extent that it will not provide the same level of protection in another accident.

The research, amongst more than 1,500 drivers, also revealed a mere 9% of parents would keep a child in a safety seat after their 10<sup>th</sup> birthday despite legal recommendations that children under the age of 11 (or under 80lbs) should not travel without a child seat of some sort. The actual average age of transition from child car seat to adult seatbelt, according to those surveyed, is being made at just six years old - four years short of the recommended age.

Kevin Clinton, Head of Road Safety at RoSPA said: "Parents should replace child car seats if the seat has already prevented a child from being injured. A child car seat may look safe but depending on its history, it may offer little or no protection.

“If parents are in any doubt, they should buy a new seat and also make sure that it is compatible with their car and fitted correctly. We support Norwich Union's decision to replace child car seats after a collision”.

Craig Martin, product manager at Norwich Union, said: “Parents already know that they should buy a car seat to keep their child safe but they may be unwittingly risking their child’s health if they don’t replace the seat after an accident.”

Norwich Union’s ‘Kids and Cars’ research also revealed:

- mothers proved to be more vigilant when it came to child safety with 62% of respondents stating that they would change their car seats following an accident, compared to 47% of dads
- following an accident, motorists check lights first (92%), followed by steering (83%), tyres (81%), brakes (79%), indicators (76%), doors (72%), licence plate (57%) and car seat (46%)
- motorists in the South-East and Scotland are most vigilant about checking their child seat after an accident – motorists in these regions are 20% more likely to do so compared to the national average.

Even at low speeds, having your child in an incorrectly fitted seat could increase their risk of injury. Every year over 8,000 children under the age of 11 are injured in car journeys, of which 500 are seriously injured. The proper use of child car restraints would prevent many of these\*.

As part of Norwich Union’s car policy Halfords will offer free advice on choosing the right car seat. They also offer a free fitting service to ensure loved ones remain safe. With 90% of the population living within 20 minutes of a store, the service is widely accessible.

For more details customers should either contact their broker or Norwich Union Direct on 0800 107 0497 or visit the website at [www.norwichuniondirect.co.uk](http://www.norwichuniondirect.co.uk).

-Ends-

For further information please contact:

Claire Culshaw or Jasmine Agbulos at Lexis Public Relations on

0207 908 6488 or email [cculshaw@lexispr.com](mailto:cculshaw@lexispr.com) or [jagbulos@lexispr.com](mailto:jagbulos@lexispr.com) or Sally Leeman at Norwich Union on 01603 684225/07800 699670 or email [sally-leeman@norwich-union.co.uk](mailto:sally-leeman@norwich-union.co.uk)

Notes to Editors:

Research commissioned by Tickbox, November 2005. Over 1,500 people were questioned in the survey.

\*National safety statistics provided by RoSPA

### **RoSPA Child Car Seat Tips**

- Do not purchase a second car seat if you cannot be certain of its history
- Make sure the manufacturer's instructions are available
- Make sure the seat is suitable for your child's weight and height
- Check that the seat meets the UN standard – look for the 'E' mark

About Norwich Union Insurance

Norwich Union is the UK's largest insurer with a market share of around 14 per cent

With a focus on insurance for individuals and small businesses, Norwich

Union insures:

- One in five households
- One in seven motor vehicles
- Around 800,000 businesses

Norwich Union products are available through a variety of distribution channels including brokers, corporate partners such as banks and building societies and Norwich Union Direct.

Aviva, Norwich Union's parent company, recently announced its acquisition of the RAC. The acquisition brings together the RAC's powerful brand and customer base with the expertise and leading position in motor insurance of Norwich Union Insurance.

Norwich Union's news releases and a selection of images are available on the Aviva internet press centre at [www.aviva.com/media](http://www.aviva.com/media).

An ISDN facility is available for studio quality broadcast. Call the press office on 01603 682264

Norwich Union Insurance Limited Registered in England No 99122.

Registered office: 8 Surrey Street, Norwich, NR1 3NG

Authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority

Member of the Aviva group