

By Paul Giampavolo

Keeping infants safe

New warnings are aimed at reducing the number of deaths and injuries caused by infant carriers falling from shopping carts.

This January shopping carts began displaying a new warning label alerting consumers not to use their own personal infant carriers or car seats on shopping carts. This new warning is in direct response to the hundreds of infants who were seriously injured in stores when their carriers fell from shopping carts. This past November an infant tragically died when his infant carrier fell from the cart in a supermarket parking lot. Personal infant carriers are not designed for use with shopping carts and most manufacturers of the personal carriers have been warning consumers against using their products in conjunction with shopping carts for years. Now the shopping cart industry is communicating this message by placing the warning directly on the shopping cart itself.

A safer alternative for consumers who shop with infants is to use the commercial infant carriers that are specifically designed to be permanently mounted and used on shopping carts. These commercial-grade infant carriers have been provided by most retailers since the 1980s and are usually made available on several carts within the store.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, some 20,000 children are injured in shopping carts each year. 82% of these injuries are falls, making shopping cart falls the nation's top injury to children under the age of 5. While the majority of these injuries involve small children—mostly in the 1- to 2-year-old range who fall from the seat or basket portion of the cart—5% of these injuries involve infants whose carrier



Paul Giampavolo is a leading expert on shopping cart safety. He is chairman of American Society for Testing Methods International (ASTM's) Consumer Products Executive Subcommittee, which oversees all consumer product standard activities, and subcommittee chairman of ASTM's Shopping Cart Subcommittee. He is also the recipient of a Consumer Product Safety Commission Chairman's Commendation in 1996 for Significant Contributions to Product Safety, and president and CEO of Safe-Strap Co. He may be contacted at paul@safestrapping.com.

falls from the shopping cart.

The new warning was developed by the American Society for Testing Methods International (ASTM) Shopping Cart Subcommittee and is part of the newly revised shopping cart standard. ASTM formed a



technical subcommittee with active participation from the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to analyze the causes of why children fall out of shopping carts and what can be done to prevent injuries. Developing ASTM safety standards is the process by which children's injuries involving consumer products are addressed and remedied in the United States. This subcommittee reviewed injury data provided by the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System Injury or Potential Injury Incident Database and special studies done by the CPSC. The ASTM standard calls for installing safety restraints on all shopping carts, keeping carts and restraints in good working order and providing warnings to consumers.

It is important to make sure that shopping carts and seat belts are always kept in good working order and commercial infant seats are readily available and kept clean. These practices are not only excellent safety and liability measures but are essential from a customer service and convenience standpoint. The blogs are fervent with moms talking about shopping cart safety and applauding stores that provide the safety equipment that help them care for their children while shopping. The simple practice of providing infant seats and working seat belts in shopping carts is an opportunity for the retailer to make the shopping experience a bit better for parents. □