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# News Release

## SafeGuard® Launches SafeGuard 4 Kids Advocate Program

**Westfield, IN -- August 8, 2008** -- Today SafeGuard®, a division of IMMI, released its SafeGuard 4 Kids advocate program, supporting parents and advocates who have an interest in equipping local school buses with lap-shoulder belts.

SafeGuard Sales Director James Johnson said that many parents are choosing not to put their children on the school bus because they prefer belted transportation. “Instead they’re transporting them in personal vehicles to school,” Johnson explained. “What they don’t realize is that this actually increases the risks to their children as they travel to school. School buses are the safest form of transportation, so anything we can do to increase ridership improves safety for children.”

Citing a 2006 American School Bus Council parent poll, Johnson said that more than half of parents have concerns about school bus safety, with lack of seat belts as the single biggest concern. Four out of five parents feel that all school buses should be equipped with lap and shoulder belts. Some express such a strong preference for belted transportation that they actually opt out of sending their children to school on the school bus.

According to NHTSA, young drivers ages 15 to 20 years old are especially vulnerable to death and injury on our roadways. Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers in America. Teens are involved in three times as many fatal crashes as all other drivers, and a recent NHTSA study showed that up to 68 percent of these young drivers were unbelted. Johnson emphasizes that the use of belted seating in every mode of transportation reinforces a lifelong habit of buckling up.

“To allow school bus passengers to remain unrestrained gives a contradictory message to our children – that seat belts can be unnecessary inside a moving vehicle,” Johnson explained. “When schools take the step to equip buses with seat belts, those buses become an important extension of the classroom for training children to build this critical lifetime habit.”

The release of the advocate program follows the October 2007 introduction of the SafeGuard FlexSeat™, which safely transports three elementary school children or two high school students on a standard 39-inch seat. This innovative bus seat with three lap-shoulder belts resolves capacity issues and enhances bus safety with its unique approach to maintaining compartmentalization.

Johnson said flexible seating is changing the dialogue in the school transportation industry as well as in school districts around the country. “Essentially, FlexSeat eliminates the capacity concerns related to the previous generation of school bus seats equipped with lap and shoulder belts. Due in part to this new technology, we are beginning to see an increasing number of individual school districts in states like Virginia, Texas, Indiana and Illinois voluntarily installing lap-shoulder belts on school buses,” Johnson said.

The SafeGuard FlexSeat™ is available today on buses by **Thomas Built Buses** and **IC Bus**. School districts and advocates can order a free SafeGuard 4 Kids advocate kit (which includes a 9-minute video and two leave-behind brochures) by visiting [safeguard4kids.com](http://safeguard4kids.com) or by calling SafeGuard at 877-447-2305.

### About SafeGuard

SafeGuard has been the leader in child passenger protection for more than 25 years and is the largest child seating safety products manufacturer in the world. Bus seats made by SafeGuard undergo the most rigorous testing in the school transportation industry. Engineers at SafeGuard utilize the company’s modern testing facility to verify the performance of bus seating products, as well as support product development of its OEM customers in the school bus industry. Over the past decade, SafeGuard has conducted ten full barrier crash tests on school buses to gain a full understanding of student occupant protection. To support the development of the company’s bus seat products, SafeGuard has conducted more than 200 sled tests and 20 school bus rollover tests, as well as performing tests on thousands of components to assure performance and durability.