Kids at risk

Malaysian motorists are shockingly unconcerned over safety for themselves and, more so, for their children. A new study indicates that awareness of vehicle safety has declined over the past eight years with children still not being secured in safety seats and even sitting on the lap of the driver. The lax attitude could be due to the false notion that accidents are unlikely to occur in residential areas with pre-schools but statistics show that cases of deaths and injuries are among the highest in such places.

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M’sians lax on car safety

Awareness for themselves and their children worsens, study finds

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PETALING JAYA: A new study shows that Malaysians are alarmingly lax on vehicle safety for themselves and more so, their children.

According to preliminary findings of the study, 90% of 236 children aged four and below were not placed in safety seats while in a vehicle.

The Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research (Miros) also found that 11% of 131 drivers drove with children on their laps.

While a representative survey has yet to be carried out, the findings are believed to reflect the level of awareness of vehicle safety nationwide.

They indicate that awareness of vehicle safety had worsened since a 2004 study by Universiti Putra Malaysia’s road safety researcher Dr S. Kulanthayan.

The eight-year-old study showed that 27.4% of drivers used at least one child safety seat, compared to just 10% of those observed this time round.

Miros design and instrumentation unit head Muammar Quadafii Mohd Ariffin said the latest study, which would observe 400 children, focused on the manner they were transported to pre-schools.

“I found it unbelievable that parents were exposing their children to such danger,” he said, adding that the research team covered nine pre-
schools in Kajang since early last month.

Muammar Quadaffi said the team found that only 22 of 131 drivers had their seatbelts on.

Another startling observation was that 23 out of 43 parents left their children in their car for more than two minutes with the engine running.

“They passed their children’s school things to the teachers first before getting their children out of the car,” he said.

He said the team noticed that 26 of the 36 motorcyclists who dropped their children off did not wear a helmet and only four of the 41 children who sat on the motorcycles wore a helmet.

He said one possible reason for the casual attitude to safety was the false notion that accidents are unlikely to occur in housing areas where many pre-schools are located.

Police statistics, however, show that passenger casualties in housing areas were among the highest recorded in 2010.

There were 156 deaths, 209 serious injuries and 302 minor injuries.

Other areas such as industrial, construction sites, bridges and schools all recorded significantly lower deaths and injuries.

“Many people also think that the airbags in their cars will keep them safe in an accident.

“Yes, airbags are designed to save lives but only if the occupants are properly restrained,” said Muammar Quadaffi, referring to the wearing of seatbelts.

He said an airbag typically deploys at 240kph - generating sufficient force to kill or severely injure a person not wearing a seatbelt.

On child safety seats, Muammar Quadaffi said: “Some parents complain that their children will not stop crying when placed in the safety seat. I tell them that at least you can hear them crying.

“Would you rather prefer never to hear them crying again?”