

PUBLIC SAFETY

Car-seat inspection policy under review

By ASHTAR ANALEED MARCUS

The mandatory child car seat inspections in Boulder City are being reviewed again by the city following a complaint by a resident.

"So many parents say, 'I don't have time for this, I'm running late,'" Boulder City Police Chief Thomas Finn said. "And we say it'll improve the safety of your child ... Nine times out of 10, they say thank you."

Finn said he is considering keeping the inspections but not making them mandatory, although the drawbacks would be that parents would not consider them or avoid them due to time constraints.

While going through a car-seat check point, Matt Ragan was pulled over by Boulder City Police for having his seat installed incorrectly. Ragan did not have a child in it.

"A car seat only has to be properly installed if a child is in it," he told City Council at the April 23 meeting. "The police have no authority. ... A crime has to be committed in order to search a car."

Ragan, a self-proclaimed Libertarian and 30-year Boulder City resident, said the police

have been overstepping their authority with the mandatory check that left him waiting curbside for 20 minutes and without being checked.

Seat inspections are conducted two days each year, in the fall and spring, from 7 a.m. to noon. Police notify residents beforehand by posting signs and on BCTV. The checkpoints in Boulder City are always in the Boulder City High School parking lot, Finn said.

"Advance notice is required so people have an opportunity to avoid the check point," Finn said. "That's the whole issue I have with Mr. Ragan. All you have to do is turn around and go away."

Some form of a car seat checkpoint program exists in 43 states, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, including in neighboring Arizona and California.

In Nevada, children must be in a car seat installed according to manufacturer's instructions if they are 6 years old or younger or weigh less than 60 pounds, according to AAA of Nevada.

And according to SeatCheck, a national campaign for safe

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Thomas Finn,
Boulder City Police Chief

car seats, seven out of 10 child car seats are improperly installed and are not safe.

Car seat inspection stations also exist in Elko, Reno, Las Vegas and Henderson, according to the highway administration, but are not mandatory. The inspections in Las Vegas require an advance appointment on Rainbow Boulevard and cost \$20.

Officers check the seat and its installation. If a seat is defective, police hand out replacement car seats for free. Finn said since the program began, only one citation has been issued because a driver went through the inspection twice and still had the seat incorrectly installed after police adjusted it.

"It's child safety, it's not enforcement," Finn said.

After Ragan complained to the City Council during

the public comments period, council members asked the city staff to review their legality.

"This isn't the first time we looked at this," Councilman Roger Tobler said. "We did this last year and (Vicki Mayes) was trying to find out how much we did. I thought we got to the point that the (American Civil Liberties Union) had signed off on it, but nobody seems to remember."

Finn, who said he spent days drafting the seat inspection policy, said he is also considering allowing parents to schedule appointments to have their installation and seat quality inspected by officers for free.

The city said it is reviewing the policies, but the upcoming mandatory checkpoints in the fall will continue in the meantime.

Burton pleads not guilty on DUI charge

By ASHTAR ANALEED MARCUS

It posed a conflict of interest. ... would seek to reduced charges. ... last drink" following the Feb.